

SERIOUSLY SPEAKING

THE MUSIC STOPPED

For those who are not aware: At all military base theaters, the National Anthem is played before the movie begins.

This is written from a Chaplain in Iraq:

I recently attended a showing of 'Superman 3' here at LSA Anaconda. We have a large auditorium we use for movies, as well as memorial services and other large gatherings. As is the custom at all military bases, we stood to attention when the National Anthem began before the main feature. All was going well until three-quarters of the way through The National Anthem, the music stopped.

Now, what would happen if this occurred with 1,000 18-22 year-olds back in the States? I imagine there would be hoots, catcalls, laughter, a few rude comments, and everyone would sit down and yell for the movie to begin. Of course, that is, if they had stood for the National Anthem in the first place.

Here in Iraq, 1,000 Soldiers continued to stand at attention, eyes fixed forward. The music started again and the Soldiers continued to quietly stand at attention. But again, at the same point, the music stopped. What would you expect 1000 Soldiers standing at attention to do? Frankly, I expected some laughter, and everyone would eventually sit down and wait for the movie to start.

But No!!... You could have heard a pin drop, while every Soldier continued to stand at attention. Suddenly, there was a lone voice from the front of the auditorium, then a dozen voices, and soon the room was filled with the voices of a thousand soldiers, finishing where the recording left off: "And the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. Oh, say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave, o'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave."

It was the most inspiring moment I have had in Iraq and I wanted you to know what kind of Soldiers are serving you. Remember them as they fight for us!

Pass this along as a reminder to others to be ever in prayer for all our soldiers serving us here at home, and abroad. Many have already paid the ultimate price.

Written by Chaplain Jim Higgins, LSA Anaconda is at the Ballad Airport in Iraq, north of Baghdad

This story only refers to the Marines but is suitable for all of troops, whoever and wherever they are serving.

A SOLDIER'S NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS
(Original Title is "Merry Christmas, My Friend")

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,
In a one-bedroom house made of plaster and stone.

I had come down the chimney, with presents to give
And to see just who in this home did live.

As I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.
No stocking by the fire, just boots filled with sand.
On the wall hung pictures of a far distant land.

With medals and badges, awards of all kind,
A sobering thought soon came to my mind.
For this house was different, unlike any I'd seen.
This was the home of a U.S. Marine.

I'd heard stories about them, I had to see more,
So I walked down the hall and pushed open the door.
And there he lay sleeping, silent, alone,
Curled up on the floor in his one-bedroom home.

He seemed so gentle, his face so serene,
Not how I pictured a U.S. Marine.
Was this the hero, of whom I'd just read?
Curled up in his poncho, a floor for his bed?

His head was clean-shaven, his weathered face tan.
I soon understood, this was more than a man.
For I realized the families that I saw that night,
Owed their lives to these men, who were willing to fight.

Soon around the Nation, the children would play,
And grown-ups would celebrate on a bright Christmas day.
They all enjoyed freedom, each month and all year,
Because of Marines like this one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone,
On a cold Christmas Eve, in a land far from home.
Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye.
I dropped to my knees and I started to cry.

He must have awoken, for I heard a rough voice,
"Santa, don't cry, this life is my choice
I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more.
My life is my God, my country, my Corps."

With that he rolled over, drifted off into sleep,
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.

I watched him for hours, so silent and still.
I noticed he shivered from the cold night's chill.
So I took off my jacket, the one made of red,
And covered this Marine from his toes to his head.
Then I put on his T-shirt of scarlet and gold,

With an eagle, globe and anchor emblazoned so bold.
And although it barely fit me, I began to swell with pride,
And for one shining moment, I was Marine Corps deep inside.

I didn't want to leave him so quiet in the night,
This guardian of honor so willing to fight.
But half asleep he rolled over, and in a voice clean and pure,
Said "Carry on, Santa, it's Christmas Day, all secure."
One look at my watch and I knew he was right,
Merry Christmas my friend, Semper Fi and goodnight.

THE SILENT RANKS

I wear no uniforms, no blues or army greens. But I am in the military in the ranks rarely seen. I have no rank upon my shoulders. Salutes I do not give. But the military world is the place where I live.

I'm not in the chain of command, orders I do not get. But my husband is the one who does, this I cannot forget. I'm not the one who fires the weapon, who puts my life on the line. But my job is just as tough. I'm the one that's left behind.

My husband is a patriot, a brave and prideful man, and the call to serve his country not all can understand. Behind the lines I see the things needed to keep this country free. My husband makes the sacrifice, but so do our kids and me.

I love the man I married. Soldiering is his life. But I stand among the silent ranks known as the Military Wife.

--Shiela Gault

There are several reputable organizations that will forward letters, emails and packages. Just open the web and in the URL, type "letters for troops" and you will find many of these organizations.

Below is the Xerox location where you can pick out a card and email it straight from there at no cost. It only takes a minute.

<http://www.letssaythanks.com/Home1280.html>