



Sarah R. Frank

Objects for Deployment

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The  
Wife  
of a  
Combat  
Soldier

This book is dedicated to:  
My loving husband, from your wife.

I'm writing this book because it's important for people to understand there are two sides to the story. What the troops went through, and what we went through here at home. It might be good for other spouses to know that no matter what they see, or go through, or how they deal with it, it's OK.



## I KNEW THINGS WOULD CHANGE FOREVER

9/11 was an attack on our country. I don't know

what I thought would happen – they'd hand him a gun, he'd go out to our fort and protect us from something we didn't yet understand.

I remember sitting in my Geo Tracker that day thinking, from that day forward, our relationship was going to be different. That night, I told him he needed to go take a trip to the dunes because they would call him up soon. I told him to turn off his cell phone; I told him not to be reachable. That weekend while he

gone, I got a call from the Unit Readiness NCO

(non-commissioned officer) asking for Will. I told them he wasn't available, but that I would get the message to him. That Monday, Will started, and that was the change forever. Since then, it's been about deploying here or going there - protecting this or protecting that.

9/11 has been our life for nine years now.

This book is divided into four chapters to correspond with our four deployments:

- IT'S NOT REAL
- LEAVE ME ALONE
- WHERE IS THE MILITARY SUPPORT?
- FRIENDS AND FAMILY ARE ALWAYS THERE WHEN I NEED THEM

IT'S NOT REAL

It started on 9/13/2001. They put him on a mission called Border Guardian. He was tasked

with securing our Montana-Canada border. To

do this, he traveled from border crossing to border crossing. We weren't married at the time.

He came home one, maybe two, days a month to rest and do laundry. To me, this didn't feel like a regular deployment because he was still in the country. He wasn't in danger. I didn't see

it as a typical "feel sorry for me because my partner's gone" thing.

I was okay being alone. Up until that point, I'd

always been with someone - from my parents,

to my roommate in college, to a bad

relationship, and back to my parents. I started

dating Will one week after I left my bad

relationship. So it was okay because it gave me

time to get to know myself: to figure out what I

liked to eat, what I liked to watch, when I

wanted to sleep, or get up, and how I liked to

keep my home.

Sadly, there was no real discussion about his deployment. No one was there to see him off at the airport. It was sad because, to him, it was important. He was playing a vital role. But to me, he was stateside. This wasn't war, this wasn't scary. Having him stateside meant everything, it does to this day. I've told him, "I don't care if you volunteer to go down to the Mexican boarder, or to Louisiana. As long as you're here, I feel safe."

























LEAVE ME ALONE

There are so many little stories I could tell.  
Have

you ever been addicted to something? If you

have, you understand that when you're  
quitting,

everything may be fine until somebody asks,

"How's quitting going?"

That's what happened. I threw myself into

work and was reminded every day when my  
co-

workers asked me, "How are you doing?"

Additionally, when he deployed, it became all

about Will. 'I' and 'we' ceased to exist. So,  
what I

heard in their question was, "I know that

that he was gone, that I was alone, and that he  
was not safe.

One co-worker in particular asked this  
question

every day. To make matters worse, she was

probably one of the nicest women you could

ever meet. Every day, she'd ask with the utmost

pity, "How are you doing today?" I would say,  
"I

am fine," because God forbid, I actually tell

the truth. I did that for one hundred days,

maybe more. Then one day, she walked up to

me with her pity, and I snapped. I said, "You

know what? I fucking suck. And you know

what? I lied to you yesterday. I fucking sucked



tell you what, how about you stop asking, and  
I'll tell you when I have a day that doesn't  
suck."

And she did, she left me alone for a while.

I just wanted to not be reminded. If I could go  
five minutes and not think about the fact that  
there were bombs going off and he wasn't safe,  
I wanted that. I needed that. I needed to be left  
alone.

I began to withdraw. I went from home to  
work and work to home. I shut off the lights  
when I was home, I didn't talk to anyone, I  
screened my calls, I refused to talk to friends

and family. I didn't seek help. I didn't go out  
at

night. When I went shopping, I got as much as  
possible so I wouldn't have to go out again.

I became very angry.

There were specific things that sparked this  
anger. Some of them came from the military.

## MILITARY TAKING OVER

I never wanted to get married because Will was  
leaving. But Will and my dad made a mans'  
agreement: if Will was deployed, I needed to be  
taken care of. I never wanted to get married for  
those reasons, but it was important to Will and

my father.

The day Will found out he was being deployed, he called me and said, “I’m leaving.” I said, “Okay. When?” He said, “in three days.” I told him I’d call the judge and make all the arrangements. So, we went and got married.

When I look back on my wedding ceremony, the one thing that I remember is the judge telling Will that he needed to smile because it was a happy occasion. Will told the judge that it was serious business, something to take seriously. To this day, all I can remember is that

like I forced Will to marry me. I have to believe it’s not true, I know that the military taught him this behavior. They have many, many ceremonies; this was another and it was the way Will knew how to deal with it. But until this point, I hadn’t understood that part of him.

Little girls dream about their wedding days. Even my own wedding day wasn’t about me. The feeling that the military was taking over my life had already started. It was the start of life being all about Will and the military. Even the wedding day wasn’t about us. Family showed up, which was awesome. And so did

the military, which was also nice. Will got a call, "Sergeant so and so's coming. Can you wait?" So we waited. The judge was so kind. Then, another call, "Sergeant so and so, can you wait?" The ranks just kept getting higher and higher. But no one introduced me. I didn't know these people. We ended up waiting for all these military personnel to show up. Everybody was kind to come, but you're not supposed to wait for the guests to arrive. You're supposed to wait for the bride and groom.

I was angry and embarrassed. No one wants that feeling. It started on my wedding day and

## LEAVE ME ALONE

When Will was gone that first time, I watched the news constantly. I didn't want anyone to talk to me for fear that I'd miss something .

In the beginning of his first deployment, I didn't hear from him for weeks. When I did, it was super vague, "I'm in Kuwait." I asked, "Is that your final destination?" He said, "It won't be, but I'm here now."

I didn't hear from him from him for weeks after that.

I watched the war play out on the news. The

bombing started, the invasion of Baghdad

happened. I sat and watched it all. The day  
that

Will arrived to Kuwait, an American base there  
was bombed.

Around that time, too, an American soldier  
went crazy and threw a grenade into an  
American tent. My mom called and told me  
that

Will had been injured; she'd seen him on TV. I  
sat there searching for him, but I never found  
him because he was never injured. He wasn't  
even there. Sitting in front of the television,  
searching for a picture of what your mother  
believes is your dead husband is absolutely

This is why I say leave me alone.

When a loved one is deployed, no one can say  
or do anything to make it better. It's a no-win  
situation. And I know that. It's like going to a  
funeral – you don't know what to say, and  
there's nothing right to say. I often got angry  
or sad or upset at what people told me. Now,  
though, I look back and see that they were just  
trying to be kind. I see also that I was blinded  
by depression, fear and anxiety. My mind  
twisted what was said. The time I snapped at  
my co-worker, for example, she didn't deserve  
that. She was just reaching out. All I see now is  
their kindness.



## COMMUNICATION

When a soldier is deployed, there are specific rules to follow. He can't share anything classified with his family (and everything's classified), and his family is told not to share anything bad that's happening at home. I understand why it's this way. Will has a job to do, he can't afford to be distracted by things outside of his control.

So the situation becomes such that he shuts down from talking to me, and I shut down from talking to him. But, when we got married, we vowed to communicate. The minute I made

those vows, I was told to break them. Will tried very hard to do what they wanted, and I tried very hard to do what they wanted. It almost destroyed our marriage.

We're learning now not to do what they want.

All three tours did different damage to our marriage. Still, we make a daily choice to be together.

## BULLET PROOF VEST

I wanted my husband to have a bulletproof vest. On the news, there were these horrible stories about guys getting killed because the



military couldn't afford to give them bullet-proof vests. I made up my mind that I would buy him one if they didn't; it was important to me that he have one. I asked him to take a picture of his and send it to me as proof.

## GRIEF

Everybody seems to think they have the 100% perfect answer for what to do as a spouse.

For those who are left behind, I don't think there is anything currently set up to prepare them for what to expect concerning the emotional toll it's going to take on their lives.

When someone goes off to war, you go through

the five stages of grieving. People don't think about it that way or realize that it's going to happen. I didn't believe it until I actually went through it myself. You don't look at it like death, but you are in denial, you are angry, you try to bargain, you get depressed and then you finally accept your position. The process is not the same for everyone, but at some level they are going to go through it.



## EXPLAINING TO HANNAH

Every year, there is a Yellow Ribbon Ceremony in Helena. I had not been talking to anyone or really communicating. The Ceremony was also the day I was supposed to get married, so I went.

A few people met me down at Memorial Park to attend the ceremony, including my little sister. She was only nine. When Will left, we explained to her that Will was doing a job in another country. We didn't explain the whole idea of war.

At the ceremony, she saw a picture of him and



asked, “what is he holding Sissy? Can I see it?

What’s that on his side?” “Well, it’s his gun,” I

responded. She wanted to know why he had

that gun. And I didn’t know what to say. We

had done everything we could to protect her

from the fact that he might be in danger. I

finally answered that he needed it to protect

himself. “Oh, like people have guns at home?”

Yes, honey,” I replied. And she was alright.

Trying to explain to a child that this new guy in

her life, who she really looked up to, might get

hurt or hurt someone else was not something I

thought a child could understand. And while I

choose to be a part of his life, and the pain

associated with that, she didn’t.

## I DIDN’T KNOW HOW TO BE A SOLDIER’S WIFE

The way I grew up, and the way I envisioned

the military, was that you marry your high

school sweetheart, he goes to boot camp, you

move to the base and live with military support

there. In reality, I didn’t know how to be a

soldier’s wife. I didn’t know what rank people

were when I talked to them. I didn’t know how

to bite my tongue. Every time I talked to

somebody, they talked in acronyms and I  
didn’t

understand what they meant. I didn’t know



and the National Guard. I didn't know how to be a soldier's wife. I didn't know how to feel, I didn't know how to act. My husband suffered because of it. When he came home, I met him at the airport with a friend of ours. Where was the welcome home sign? The balloons? The flowers? I didn't know how to do those things. I don't know how to do it now either, but I'm better than I was...

#### HOMEcomings

When my husband got off the plane, he greeted me like he'd been gone for a day. He patted me

on the back and said, "let's go get my luggage." He was distant. And he needed to be. He was trained to be. He didn't know how to come back and be a husband instantly.

This was the start of him being very directive about things. "This is how it is. Do this now." He had a hard time understanding that the way things operate in the military are not the way things operate with your wife and your friends. I

swear, he looked at me and saw his soldiers. I was a soldier in his eyes. He talked to me in such

a way that my feelings got hurt.

"I AM NOT A SOLDIER"

I remember a trip we took together right after he got home. We visited two of my favorite places in the world: the Oregon coast and Multnomah Falls in the Colombia River Gorge.

When we were at the Falls, Will asked me if I wanted to hike to the top. We did. I'm not the physical type. If I do a hike, I want to enjoy it - from the views to the surrounding environment. He barked at me the entire way. It was like we were on a march. It was so beautiful: from the river bluff, you can see clear into Washington to the orchards. It's one of the

most beautiful places in the world. All I wanted

to do was enjoy it with him. But, his mission was

to get to the top. He was on a mission, and I

had to be too. This is when I started saying,

"I'm not a soldier, Will." I was screaming it,

over and over. "I'm not a soldier." He wasn't

screaming. He never screamed. He only barked.

Short and curt. "Get up the mountain now." He

lost track of the notion that this was an

experience we were sharing, not a mission to

execute.



Multnomah Falls...





No fancy wedding for us.....

Get in, get it done, and go back to work.





He went in as my fiance and came out as my  
husband.







My co-workers decorated my office for me  
right before I came back to work but after Will  
left.

This was a celebration of our wedding, but all I  
could see was where I was when I was told he  
was leaving.









Leaving the United States.



I was told this was supposed to protect him.

It didn't look safe to me.

























CAUTION







Not just at Christmas  
but all the time,  
everything in the world  
seems better when I'm with  
you.

Wishes for  
the happiest kind  
of anniversary...

We love  
you!

One  
our time  
elegant a  
for his mag  
and Queen  
of "Voc  
T...





WHERE IS THE MILITARY SUPPORT?

The country has made its practice to deploy National Guard members to foreign soil. These are citizen soldiers whose mission has traditionally been to protect and help our communities within its borders. The people who are left behind do not live on a base; they do not have a military community. There just isn't support.

I don't think the military here was able to provide anyone with a realistic idea of what to expect at home. The National Guard / Tri-West/ Family Readiness group provided a checklist of what to do ahead of time. I remember leaving

checklist this is what you are suppose to discuss with your spouse: Where do you turn off the water? How do you pay the bills? There were no real questions to discuss what you're each feeling.

The divorce rate among military families has skyrocketed since 9/11. There is no support for how to handle the emotional strain of deployments.

Will volunteered to be redeployed to Iraq. This decision made me extremely angry. I couldn't understand why he'd put us in that position again. But now I know why. My husband had unfinished business. He has his own logic for



that. The first time he went to war, he did what he needed to do and only part of him came home. The second time, he never came home. He still has never come home. You meet a new person after each deployment.

I didn't want to experience the depression again that I experienced his first tour. I still don't really know how I came out of that dark place. I didn't want to go back to it, because I was afraid I wouldn't come out again. So I vowed to get involved.

I was going to help other women. I was going to help myself. I was going to be the ideal

combat soldier's wife.

#### WHAT SUPPORT?

I was always told by the National Guard, "We will help." When I finally called and said, "I want help." I was re-routed to Syracuse, NY (the unit with which Will was deployed). I was told there was no help for me here in Montana.

But I kept calling and pestering until I found what they considered to be help.

When I finally did get a response, the first thing I got was a class the FACT sent me to; it was a class about how to be a leader in a

Readiness Group. I learned all about how to be a

“leader.” But I still didn't have any of my own questions answered.

I knew the name “family readiness group,” which is a group of military spouses who gather weekly or monthly to help each other in a variety of ways. I worked hard to find a group to get involved in; it wasn't readily apparent.

The Helena Readiness Group is unique because it

doesn't belong to any particular unit. I identified with this because, as a Guardsman, Will had been deployed alone to other units

across the country. I quickly learned the group's

objectives: to plan activities for their kids and

to send packages to their units. It was great to be

around women who knew that if you just needed

to sit in your car for awhile to take a break from

it all, that was okay. They were nice women,

but they had their plans and I couldn't relate to

them. I didn't have children. And so I still

ended up feeling like an outsider.

So, again, the help wasn't there. And in its place, there were many false promises made by others. But, I never gave up and I kept pushing



Will was deployed, I learned how to do things:

how to use power tools, do electrical work,  
install doors and cabinets, and fix the lawn  
mower. I learned how to manage the  
household, and pay the bills. If I didn't know  
how to do something, I'd get a book, or  
troubleshoot until I worked myself out of the  
situation.

There were good deeds done, too. My  
mom sent me a card every week, for example.  
Friends came over to take the Christmas lights  
down. My co-workers learned how to work  
with  
me even if I couldn't stop crying. These were

value of random acts of kindness.

## NO ONE COULD ANSWER MY QUESTIONS

Due to the nature of Will's military jobs, he  
had

a lot of problems getting paid on time. We  
could never count on his pay; you never knew  
when it was going to come. He and I both  
worked really hard to correct the problem.

There were plenty of people to call – National  
Guard operator in Montana, or Army  
personnel in New York through whom Will  
deployed – and everyone crossed me back to  
the previous person I called, or pointed me in a

questions. It goes back to the fact that the National Guard was not designed to send its members overseas. Administratively, no one knows how to manage these people - us. So we fall off the radar and no one picks up the slack.

#### WAR ROOM

The house we bought prior to this deployment seemed to be all about me. I wanted him to have his own space, so I finished a room for him. He named it the war room. I called it “his room.” It took me longer than it should have, but the process was almost therapeutic. I worked on it every single day, and learned something

new each time. He was not as pleased at the outcome as I was because he’s not a man who likes to say, “look at me, look at me.”





ضابط کینک فرانک  
SFC Frank William





## CREATION OF CODE WORDS

When the troops go overseas, they're told that everything is classified. They can't talk about it.

Often times, this means families back home can't know where their loved ones are. Instead, information is packaged differently. "I'm at FOB Black Horse." So, you search for it on a map, only to learn that FOB Black Horse isn't on any maps.

One day, we were on the phone. "How's Bill's dog doing?" he asked. "Fine," I said. But I couldn't really understand why he kept asking. He constantly asked. It finally dawned on me

that Bill named his dog after the base he was stationed at in Kirkuk, and Will was telling me that's where he was now. This conversation marked the beginning of us establishing our own code. With it, we were able to communicate about a wide range of things that had previously been prohibited. Before he left for Afghanistan, we established a series of code words in advance. 'Camping' was a code word.

If he said anything about 'Easter' or 'jelly beans,' I knew exactly where he was. You know?

It made all the difference, for us and for me. It



## TRYING TO BRING THE DOGS HOME

During Will's second tour in Iraq, I really tried to reinvent myself as a "soldier's wife." Putting forth the extra effort was important to me. I prioritized three projects to keep me busy and connected to Will's new world: I gathered school supplies and stuffed animals for (Iraqi?) children who had lost everything, and I tried my best to bring the dogs home.

Will loves dogs. He befriended many during his foreign tours. I regularly sent dog biscuits and flea collars for his four-legged friends. Through

Will, I learned that most dogs are not

domesticated. They live on the streets, eating and sleeping when and where they can. People treat them like we treat them like pests – kicking them, throwing rocks at them. Many were malnourished and sick with disease. They get very little love or safety like they're given here.

I started looking for property in preparation for

adopting some of the dogs. A nice place for them to run. I began talking to people about adopting some of them too. I knew if we started

bringing them home, there would be many homes. But, when it came down to it, we weren't allowed to bring them home because of

them, feeding them, loving them, and keeping them relatively healthy, we had to let them go. Will had to leave them behind. I hope the new troops continued to take care of them. I do know that it was common for soldiers to sneak food out of the mess halls for them. Beyond food, though, they needed love.

In the end, there was nothing we could do.





## MAIL

When Will was deployed the first time, he went with one guy he knew. The same goes for the second time. The third time, though, he went alone. He didn't know anybody. I was worried about his lack of companionship. How do you prepare to go out on missions and possibly give your life for someone when you've only known them for three days? I know my husband was prepared to do that for a stranger, but I didn't know if the strangers were prepared to do the same for him. If I didn't support him at home, where was his support going to come from?

I sent him letters, packages, items for the dogs.

I sent his friends mail, too. Anything I could do

to help make Will's life easier, I did. I was at the post office every single day. I know they save the loads for up to a week and ship it all at once, but I wanted him to see the postmarks and know that he was thought of daily.

Whether or not he knew it, I needed to go everyday. It was a route to him.

## DRIVING HOME

If your soldier is hurt, you get a phone call. If your soldier is dead, you get a knock at the door.

My house is the first one on the block. Every  
time I returned home, panic set in. I knew they  
would not have called me at work. They  
wouldn't call to tell you to go home. They'd  
just  
be there when you arrived.

Within a couple hundred feet of the house, just  
before turning the corner to my block, I'd  
get really anxious. Everything in my body  
would lock up. Before I knew it, I'd be parked  
in  
the middle of the street. I got creative. I thought  
if I took an alternate route, I'd be less afraid to  
turn the corner and confront what was or  
wasn't there waiting for me.

But nothing worked.

I've been honked at. I've been yelled at. At  
some point, you've got to garner whatever  
strength you've got and make that turn.

No one was ever there. Ever.

And then I was mad because no one is there,  
and I was alone.





No matter where he's been in the world, I've  
always had flowers delivered to me on every  
special occasion.

His favorite outdoor activity is snowmobiling.

He missed four seasons of this due to tours.









OUR DEBT TO THE  
HEROIC MEN AND VALIANT  
WOMEN IN THE SERVICE  
OF OUR COUNTRY CAN  
NEVER BE REPAID. THEY  
HAVE EARNED OUR  
UNDYING GRATITUDE.  
AMERICA WILL NEVER  
FORGET THEIR SACRIFICES.

PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN

Prior to going overseas he got a couple day  
pass

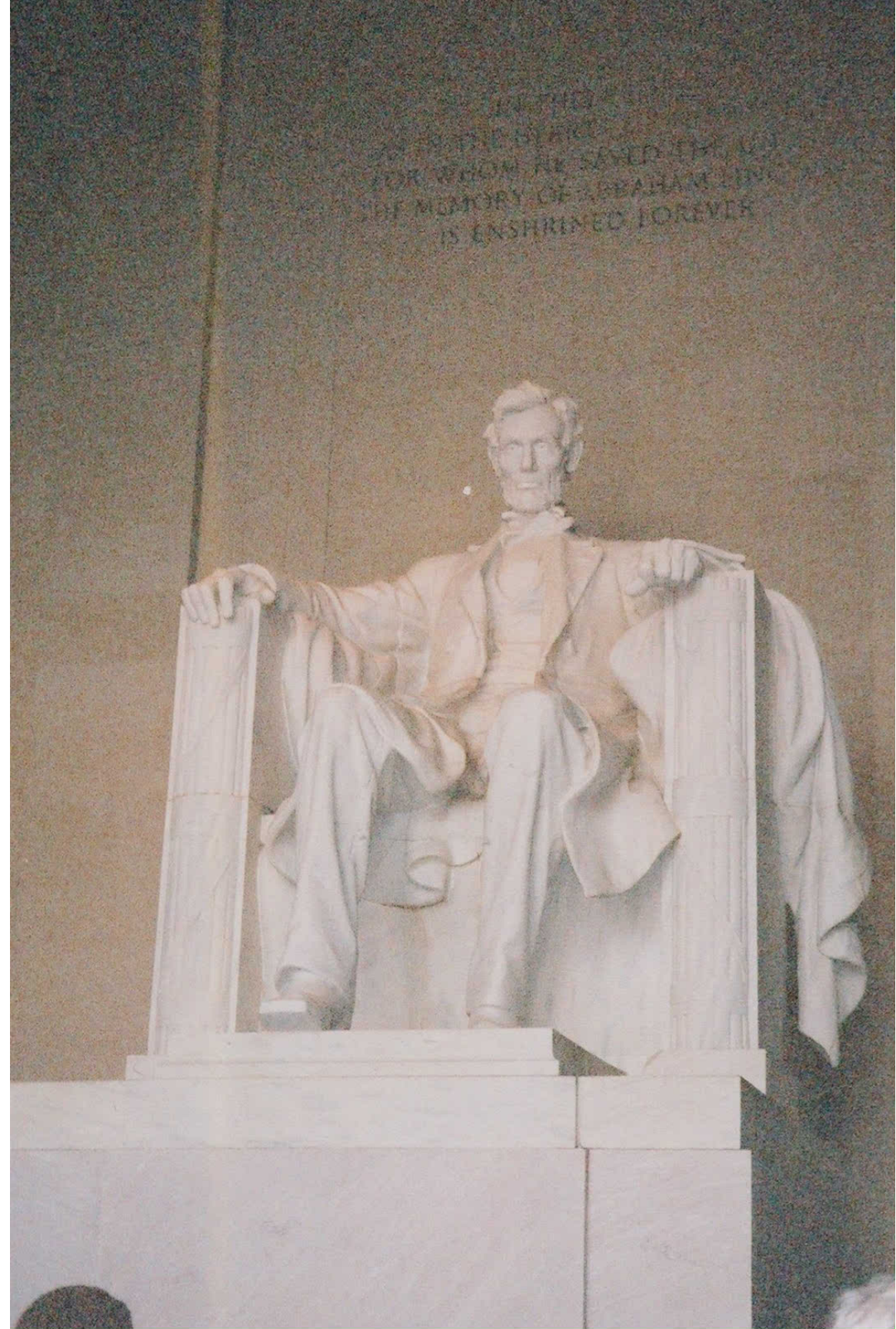
and we were able to pay our respects to the

soldiers who had come before us.





I sat on his steps and got lost in my thoughts of  
the spouses that came before me and those that  
would come after me.



I was so happy he could do something that  
made him smile.







Never













You may be looking at the outhouse,

he was looking at the temperature.











What a horrible place to be raised as a child,

but the kid looked so happy.



MAY 28 2005







2005



Even on leave, we were still involved.







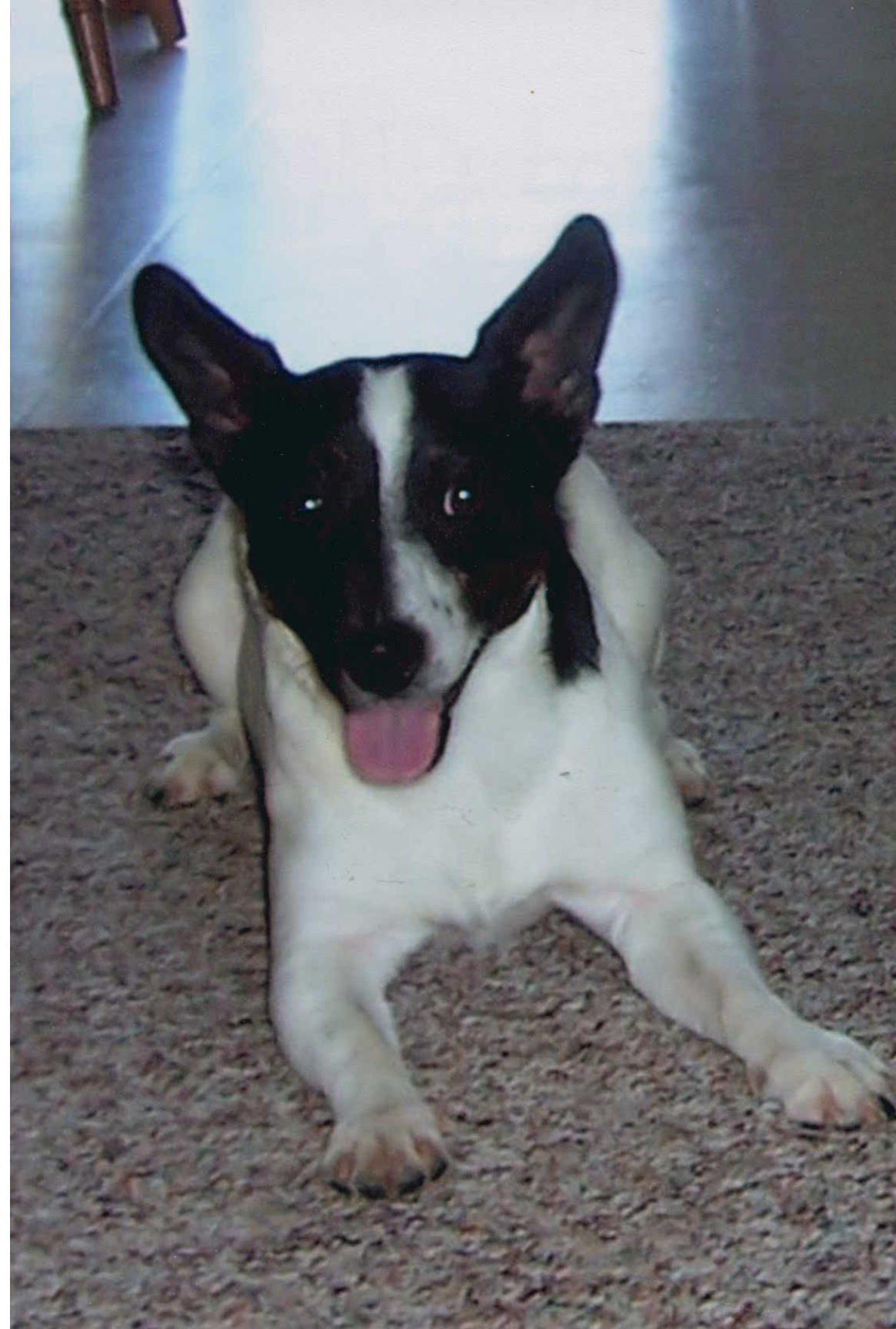


When I would cry, he would put his forehead  
right against mine and just sit there for what  
seemed like hours.

He always knew when I was sad or upset and  
was patient with me.

He was always excited and happy to see me.

There were days I think he was the only reason  
I got out of bed.









He was a Momma's boy until Pappa came home.



My first surrogate husband.

We were so inappropriate, but we were so excited, we just started goofing off.





I could barely contain myself.







FRIENDS AND FAMILY  
ARE ALWAYS THERE WHEN  
YOU NEED THEM



Family and friends are always there when you need them. I'm not sure why this lesson took so long for me to learn. During Will's tours, when I needed to reach out, I went by the book. I sought help through the military's "support" system. But it wasn't enough. Then, in 2008, it dawned on me: it's all about our friends and family. When Will left for his fourth tour, our friends came together like they never have before.

It was healing for me to be surrounded by people who hurt like I did, who felt Will's absence like I did.

## MEDIA

Everything about Will's last deployment was publicized. When Will left, the media was there.

When Will came home for a weekend, they were there. When he re-deployed, they were there. Every time we turned around, the press was there. Everything was publicized.

Having a camera shoved in your face when vulnerable feels like an invasion of privacy.

I remember being so mad because the camera caught something just Will and I do together.

It was our thing; it was not meant to be shared.

When Will left, my friends and my family protected me from the media presence at the airport. They always made sure there was someone between the camera and me.

Will couldn't come home for his grandmother's funeral because of a media opportunity; they went down to document his unit in training (the Governor and State General were there).

Every time I turned around, I felt like someone had a camera in my face and it was directing our lives.

I remember one of our friends was saying good-

bye to his kids; he was trying to have a moment with his family, and the camera kept getting right in the middle of them.

I think the world needs to know what's going on

in this realm, but the media is trying to capture private moments. Most people would be willing

to give information, but not at these moments – the hellos and goodbyes. You want to film a homecoming, that's fine, but please do that part from a distance.

I wanted to be left alone, as I did during the



family were there with me, supporting me,  
protecting me. I found support not through  
the  
traditional military support groups, but from  
the people I love.

## DON'T EXAGGERATE

Over the years of deployment, it became  
apparent that people want recognition for their  
good deeds. They would exaggerate something  
they had done to boast their own egos and  
patriotism. But, then, who is it really about?

Supporting a soldier or a spouse is not  
something

to brag about, it should come from the heart.

The Collins were amazingly supportive of Will.  
They sent many incredible, thoughtful,  
important gifts to him. And that meant so  
much to me because, aside from me, he didn't  
get a lot of mail. They sent him a bandana

because the helmets pull your hair and it hurts;  
they sent a Camelback; their girls drew him  
pictures. They did all of this so quietly. No  
issue  
was ever made, just lots of subtle love.

It was refreshing to be helped without having  
to

ask for it, seek it out, or control it.

They did so much, and they don't even know it.

#### WILL MISSED OUT

Will missed so much when he was deployed. He  
missed his baby brother's high school and  
college graduation, birthdays, weddings, his

I was involved in all these things while he was  
away. I don't think he wanted me to suffer, but  
I wonder if there was that part of him that  
didn't want me going out and having all  
of these experiences without him.

#### HE WAS "DEFYING THE ODDS"

I'm sure that there is some statistical person out  
there that calculates the odds of all sorts of  
things. The more you are in a war zone, the  
higher likelihood you have of not making it  
back home. My dad came up with the term  
"defying the odds."



So here Will was, getting deployed for the fourth time, third time overseas. My dad and I, in particular, felt like he was defying the odds. I never told Will that I felt this way until after he came home.

#### WHAT YOU DO AND DON'T YOU TELL YOUR SPOUSE

The military tells you not to talk about anything bad with your deployed spouse. But don't tell them all the good things you did either because then they'll think you don't need them anymore. So what do you talk about?

You don't know what to talk about.

We agreed this last time that we were just going to tell each other everything. No holding it in, no bottling it up. And while we both tried our best, we weren't totally successful. I think a lot of it comes from being so messed up for so long that you just don't know what to say anymore.

He has never been able to fully open up about his experiences. I know that deep down he's just trying to protect me, but the lack of disclosure is still hurtful. We've both hurt each other because

How do you go from preparing to leave – saying everything that you need to say because you may not get the chance to say it again – to shutting off completely? What part of this scenario is functional? People get in fights because one partner didn't tell the other part something ONE TIME. What happens when you repeatedly haven't shared "some things" for a year?

#### SHARING PHONE CALLS

Everybody loves Will. And my family and friends were opening up to me, because I was around more. They began sharing their pain

with me that they experienced, too. I was oblivious to this the first three deployments. I realized regularly that someone else needed his phone call more than I did. So, I got messages to Will that would say, "you need to call so-and-so." And it went down like this: he'd call me to quickly say that he was okay, then I'd say, "are you going to call so-and-so?" Then, I called that person on my cell phone, to make sure they sat by their phone and he called them. This happened more times than I was willing to share, but not as much as they needed. It was hard; I'm glad we did it because



And Will needed to know that more than his wife cared about him back home. But, it was hard to share – to give up that phone call because you didn't know if there would be another.

That's selfish of me, and I'm willing to admit that. But I'm still happy I did it.

My personality is more of a "couple person" than a "community person," but he is very much a "community person."

IT WAS ALL ABOUT WHAT HE COULD GET FOR PEOPLE WHEN ALL WE WANTED WAS HIM

Almost any time we talked on the phone for more than a minute, he wanted to know what he could bring home for people. It was always about that.

"Do you think so and so would like this? Or this person would like that? Do you think the parents are going to get mad if I give another gift to their kid? I found the perfect thing..." He had a list of people he wanted to bring gifts to. There were a lot of people on that list: mother, fathers, sisters, brothers. Lots of gifts for

everyone: a maroon and white scarf  
especially for her because she's a University of  
Montana Grizzlies fan, or because he would  
like that. It was constant, every single time we  
talked. All these people. He also asked me what  
I wanted.

"I just want you to come home." He would  
say,

"No, really, what do you want?"

"I just want you." My answer every time. "I  
just want you to come home."

He came home with boxes, those big black tuff  
boxes, filled with gifts. It was his way of









I am thankful to my girlfriends for letting me borrow their husbands.

They were husband 2, 3, and 4 and switched places depending on the day, but Will was always number 1.







She was his Nana and he her Grandson.











MAY 10 2008







In the National Guard it has always been one weekend a month, two weeks a year, and to protect our communities if called upon.

Now we are sending these troops over seas for years and sending them again and again. This is not what we signed up for.







SEP 11 2008









AUG 30 2008

Another good time Will missed.







MAY 12 2008



AUG 14 2008





I got what I wished for.

## I FINALLY GOT THE HOMECOMING I WANTED

It took a while, but I got it.

The first time he came home from overseas I

got a pat on my back, “let’s go get my  
luggage.”

The second time he came home, I wanted to be  
swept off my feet. I told him it was important

to me to feel wanted and to feel like I had been

missed. He tried really hard the second time,  
but

it just didn’t work. Will got off the plane and  
he

was the only guy coming home, then the state

Sgt Major stepped in front of me and shook  
his

The last time he came home I had kind of given  
up hope of the picturesque romantic moment.

I was anxious and nervous, did he miss

me? Did he love me still? As I stood on the

tarmac, I watched the plane land and the troops

get off. That’s when it all fell together. We ran

towards each other, and I knew he was home.





## COLOPHON

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We made this book for listening. Please accept our invitation. We made this book for deployment. Please pass it along and invite someone else to listen.

Thank you,  
Monica Haller

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