

In Memoriam

Captain Sean Patrick Sims '94 – The High Cost of Freedom

My son, the soldier, comes home... for good.

At last report he had left Iraq and was awaiting a flight in Kuwait. With luck he will be in Germany today and then on to Texas. By the way, he is called "remains" but I know better. He is my son.

I want to tell you about him. Not because he is so great a guy – although I think so, but because he represents the thousands of sons and daughters America is sending to far away places to secure our peace and our liberties at home.

Captain Sean Patrick Sims '94, commanding officer of A Company, 2-2 BN, 1st Infantry Division, was killed in action Nov. 13 in Fallujah, Iraq, while clearing insurgent occupied buildings. A tough assignment, clearing an urban area. Dirty, dangerous work. Sean lost his executive officer the day before and I read of the deaths of two Marine Captains who were similarly killed in Fallujah.

It is sad when a father must write his own son's obituary. I don't know what to say. My son, like others falling in that conflict, was a hero who believed in his mission, his unit, and his men. He also believed leaders should be in the front, leading, not following. And that is how he died. He was well liked and respected by his superiors and the men in his company, who sensed his concern for their well being. He was also concerned about the well being of the Iraqi people and did his utmost to guard them from harm.

Sean was a devout catholic, who lived the tenets of his faith on a daily basis. There is no doubt in our minds that Sean is now in heaven and in the hands of our Lord. We grieve for his loss, which is our loss, but not for his soul. If anything, we ask his intercession on our behalf as he is now much better placed for that effort.

I don't know what to say or how to describe the sacrifice of your blood for this country. Having served in Vietnam, twice,

having a father who spent 36 years as a soldier through two wars, and a brother who served in Vietnam twice and is now 100% disabled from his injuries there, I am encouraged by the awareness of our countrymen for the sacrifices of our children. I am thankful for the realization by our citizenry that freedom is not free.

My son was not a rampant political supporter for any party, although he was probably more Republican by instinct. But he did

provide support to enemies who are intent on our destruction. We can debate on how this war developed and was executed. It can not be debated that nations now look carefully at their responsibility and accountability before providing such support. America has made its statement. If you support terrorism, we will find you and destroy you, whatever the cost.

My son understood this and believed what he was doing was right. But he also believed that you can't go in and destroy a country and walk away. He was anxious for the insurgents to be quickly defeated so we could start the nation building that Iraq so sorely needs. He chafed at the delays and the debates in implementing aid. He was not a romantic. He understood well the backwardness of the country, the strangle hold of its religion and more challengingly, the social and political pressure of the tribal system. They all looked insurmountable when you add them up. But he had been raised in a tradition of grit and putting one foot forward at a time, so he was not deterred by the challenge. He was faced with a difficult, dirty and seemingly impossible task, but his response was not how do I get out of it but how do I get it done.



Courtesy of The Eagle

have an abiding trust and belief in the United States of America. He felt we are a moral nation, steadfast in our principles; this nation does not take its commitment of its sons and daughters to war lightly. But unlike many nations in the world, we do not shirk our duties to commit our blood to just and necessary causes. Because that is what keeps us free.

I think he understood something which seems to have been lost in the debates over weapons of mass destruction and poor intelligence estimates in this particular war. That is that sovereign nations must be held accountable for their actions. We cannot tolerate nations that hide behind borders and

I think his sacrifice to his nation can best be summed up in a message I received from a friend expressing condolences for his loss: "His sacrifice was made to keep my family, my sons and my grandchildren as well as all Americans safe and free and for that we will eternally be grateful." That's nice. My son would agree. That's what he thought he was doing.

In retrospect, the true hero here is his wife, Heidi (Duty) '96, who is left a young widow with a young son to raise. She is a woman of grace, and grit. She will do well by her son, Colin, and her warrior husband.

Tom Sims '69
Col. US Army Retired