



## **Remembering Our Fallen**

**By Carol Harper**

**Editor, *Amador Community News***

**[www.NewsAmador.com](http://www.NewsAmador.com)**

While in Nashville, I was the Vice-President and Director of PR for the *Tennessee Marine Family*. As an organization, we would hold two annual care package drives and a Fallen Heroes Memorial Ride. As a military family, we supported, encouraged and uplifted each other, especially during deployments. If it wasn't for the TMF while my son Kevin was deployed to Iraq, I think I would have gone crazy. As if it weren't enough that my daughter, too, was in boot camp at Parris Island at the time Kevin was deployed...it was just difficult to manage the emotions as a mother of two Marines. However, knowing that there were other mothers who had gone through the same thing, and having them share similar emotions and experiences had helped me immensely. "Family" is what you make it, and the Tennessee Marine Family was truly a family to the core...and the Corps.

There was one time that the TMF President was out of town, and I was called, as the VP, to attend the memorial service of a Fallen Hero. I had never represented the TMF at a memorial service before, so the experience was new to me. Kevin was still in Iraq at the time, and though I was a bit reluctant, I said, "*Yes, of course. I would be honored.*"

So I did, and it was one of the most difficult memorial services I've ever had to attend. The mother of her fallen son appeared surprisingly strong and solid at the beginning of the service, and was smiling and greeting the family and guests. The Patriot Guard stood watch...many military organizations were present to extend their condolences. But when they presented the folded US flag that had draped over her son's casket, the entire crowd broke down in sobs. It couldn't be helped. And I stood there, numb, watching the videos of this young man's life - from baby, to toddler, to child, to teen - to young man who willingly gave his life for his country - and thought about my own baby boy in a strange land, standing guard at some location they couldn't disclose to me, wondering if at any time I would get "The Visit".

So I will never forget that memorial service for as long as I live. I wasn't alive during WWI or WWII. I was a care-free child during the whole Vietnam era, had very little knowledge about Desert Storm, about OIF...until it impacted my life directly, with my own child born from my womb saying "*I love you, Mom...goodbye.*" for what could have been forever.

Before Kevin left for Iraq, we sat down together with some papers to fill out. He said, “Mom, you have to fill these out and sign these, in case something happens to me.” I was in a sort of denial at the time, thinking, “*What do you mean? You’re going to be fine. Why do I have to sign these? I don’t want to sign these. Don’t make me do this.*” A bit perturbed, he said, “*Mom! Sign ‘em!*” He didn’t understand how difficult it was for me to have to face a reality that he may not come home alive. My heart heavy, I signed the papers.

And those feelings culminated as I stood in a shock that only a military mom could feel. And as I watched this mother grieve at the burial of her beautiful her son at the memorial service I attended, I learned a great lesson: that not only are our military selfless and sacrificial, but the mothers are, too. That there are no words to describe the feelings of that sacrifice. I think it appropriate that Mother’s Day is at the beginning of the month of May, and that Memorial Day is at the end.

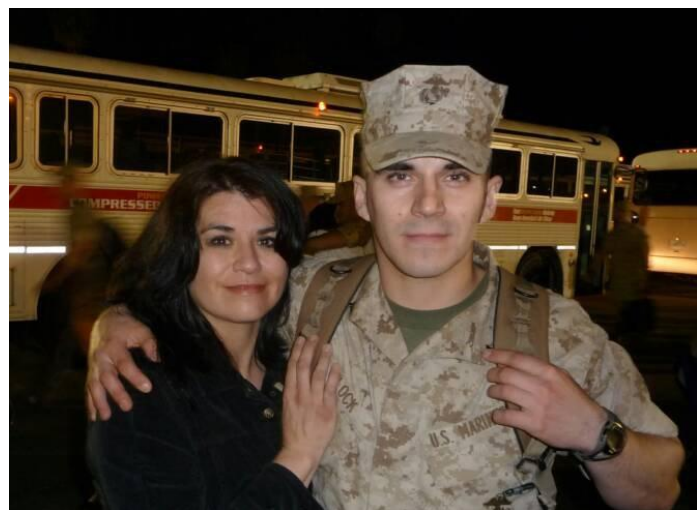
My son came home, alive and well. I cried tears of joy as I wrapped my arms around a big, husky young man who had been through and seen enough. But so many don’t come home in bus caravans with Camp Pendleton as their destination; so many come home in caskets with the U.S. flag draped over them.

Please, take some time this weekend. Just a moment, it doesn’t have to be long. Maybe have a moment of silence or say a little prayer over your Memorial Day barbecue, but think about Memorial Day as a day of sacrifices, both past and present. Think about our military all over the world. Think about them, not as a unit or a platoon, or on some base off in the middle of a desert in a foreign country. These are America’s sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles.

Think about our veterans. They have stories to tell that will help us to never, ever forget why they fought for America—why they did what they did, and why they are who they are today. Honor them. We have an American Legion Hall here in Amador County. Visit it. Take your children to a memorial cemetery, or to the section of a cemetery that honors our Fallen.

This Memorial Day...remember.

Carol Harper



**“Remembering Our Fallen” by Carol Harper. Copyright © 2011 by Carol Harper. All rights reserved. For permission to publish, contact [carolrharper@gmail.com](mailto:carolrharper@gmail.com)**