



# Christian Report

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## CHRISTMAS IN CAMOUFLAGE

### Scott's Christmas #Navy

I was stationed on board the USS Georgia (SSBN-729) before she was converted to a SSGN (Guided Missile). It was Christmas Eve and I was standing the last (1800-2400) Engine Room Forward Watch.

My watch relief was late and I was getting frustrated and wasn't very happy. They had just called "Alert One, Alert One" for an incoming message to Radio. It turned out to be "Familygrams," a short (50 Word) message sent by a family member.

We were given 10 FamilyGrams/Sailor before deployment and I had given one to my Mom and 9 to my girlfriend at the time. Adding to the frustration,... were now more than 1/2 way through the patrol,... and I had only received one Familygram,... from my Mom.

My watch relief still had not showed-up and it was now Christmas Day. The new watch section was shifting the electric power line-up,... which was done during the Mid-Watch. My watch relief had just showed up and I gave him a piece of my mind as he was almost giddy about a FamilyGram just received.

I headed up the ladder from Engine Forward to Middle Level just as they shifted the Motor Generator out of Phase.

"Shifting a ship service motor generator out of phase" is not a standard operational procedure; rather, maintaining phase alignment is critical for safety and to prevent severe damage to the generator and electrical system. Operating a generator out of phase with the main bus can lead to catastrophic failure.

And a large fireball shot out of the Motor Generator in front of me,... the Engine Middle Level Watch saw it too, before,... "Fire, fire, fire was an-

nounced in the motor generator breaker, Starboard Side. After helping to put out the breaker fire with a CO2 extinguisher. I was able to go to bed.

While in my rack (bed) I stewed for a moment before God reminded me how lucky I was not to be standing directly in front of that fireball,... if I had been revealed a second earlier, I would have been toast. I was able to find gratitude in all the frustration and disappointment that evening,... recognizing that my life was spared and that was the greatest gift of all. ❤️



### Melanie's Christmas #Army Wife

The first Christmas after my husband deployed to Iraq felt like living inside a snow globe someone had forgotten to shake. Everything was still and thin and quiet, and our money was even thinner. While other people filled their carts with shiny decorations, I walked the cramped aisles of the dollar store, counting crumpled bills and loose

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change, determined to send a bit of home all the way to the desert.

I chose a tiny plastic tree, the kind that could sit on a metal footlocker, and a handful of dollar ornaments that didn't match but somehow belonged together: bright bead ropes, a couple of chipped snowflakes, and a small colored light-up star that felt almost too hopeful. At home, I wrapped the little tree as carefully as if it were made of glass, tucked in a note that tried to sound brave instead of lonely, and mailed it off, trusting that it would find him somewhere in that faraway sand.

Days stretched into weeks, and the season moved on without him—lights went up on houses we used to drive past together, and carols played in stores that made the empty passenger seat beside me feel even louder. Then, one ordinary day, an email arrived with a single attachment: a photo of my husband in uniform, dusty and tired, standing next to that tiny tree perched on a battered table, the lit-up star slightly crooked on top. Behind him, the walls were bare and the world looked colorless, but that little tree glowed like it was standing in the middle of our living room instead of a war zone.

His smile wasn't big, but it was real, soft at the edges in a way I hadn't seen since before he left, and I felt something in my chest unclench as I realized that, for a moment, I had managed to send Christmas to Iraq. Over the years, we have celebrated holidays in safer, warmer rooms, with bigger trees and nicer ornaments, but that picture has never lost its place in my heart. It reminds me of who we were back then—young, broke, scared, and stubbornly hopeful—and how a tiny dollar store tree with a crooked star became one of my favorite holiday memories, proof that love can make even the smallest light shine bright in the darkest places. ❤️



## Jacob's Christmas #Army

I was nineteen on my first deployment, out in Southwest Asia—nothing but dust and concertina wire as far as you could see. Christmas was coming, and I was doing my best to ignore it.

Back home in Spokane we always went big: Dad's lights could probably guide aircraft, Mom's cinnamon rolls were legendary, and my little sister still set traps for Santa every Christmas Eve. The year before I left, I complained the whole time about untangling lights and hauling boxes out of the attic. That year overseas, I would've given anything to complain about lights again.

Over there, the chow hall tried. They called it a "holiday meal," but it was still rubber turkey and instant potatoes. Someone put up a little plastic tree in the morale tent with a few chem-light ornaments. That was the extent of Christmas decorations.

Two nights before the 25th, the First Sergeant came through the barracks carrying a big stack of care packages. He started tossing boxes onto racks and calling out names. I wasn't expecting anything—nobody really knew exactly where I was—so I just kept my head down.

Then he hollered, "Jacob! Spokane showed up!" and slid a box my way.

I waited until lights-out to open it (you don't open something like that with twenty guys watching).

Inside was absolutely perfect:

- Two cans of the terrible gas-station coffee I used to drink before zero period
- A huge bag of sour gummy worms (my sister had clearly raided her own stash)
- Thick wool socks with reindeer on them (Mom was convinced it was freezing)

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- A little knit stocking with “JACOB” stitched crooked across the top
- A pack of baby wipes (worth their weight in gold out there)
- Three handwritten letters from complete strangers back home

And tucked at the bottom: a picture of my family standing in front of the house, lights blazing, holding a hand-painted sign that said, “We love you, Jacob. Hurry home.”

I sat on my bunk and cried—quiet, because barracks walls are thin and nobody needs an audience, but I cried hard. My battle buddy Ramirez reached over without a word and nudged the tissue box closer, then whispered, “Mine had homemade tamales.” We both just sat there for a while, pretending we weren’t wiping our eyes.

I wore those reindeer socks until the heels were gone.

I never found out exactly who collected the gifts and packed that box, but whoever you are—thank you. You didn’t just send snacks and socks. You sent Christmas to a bunch of kids who thought they were too tough to need it.

That was the hardest and best Christmas I’ve ever had, and it’s the one I’m most thankful for. It taught me that the greatest gift isn’t stuff—it’s knowing that somebody back home remembered your name and prayed for you.

I still have the socks. I still have the picture. They’re in a shadow box in my office now, right beside that same photo my family sent. I still thank God every Christmas for the people who made sure none of us were forgotten.

Merry Christmas from Spokane once again! ❤️

## **Patti’s Christmas #Army Wife**

Sometimes the hardest Christmases become the most sacred.

November 2006 brought the call no one wants: Ken’s unit had suffered its first KIA. The widow was my junior-high friend—the girl who once passed me notes about our future husbands. We never imagined those dreams would end with me holding her while she sobbed over a flag-draped casket.

A week later we flew to D.C. for back-to-back funerals. Ken saluted his fallen brothers, then boarded a plane straight back to Iraq. Christmas was coming, but grief had already moved in.

Our kids were six, nine, and twelve. They still believed in Santa, still needed the magic. So the day Ken walked through the door on R&R, I dragged the Christmas boxes out of the garage. Tree up in



November. Lights before Thanksgiving. I needed him to place the star on top, to give us one photograph of the five of us together—just in case.

Two weeks later he was gone again. More names would be added to the memorial wall before he came home for good in October 2007.

That December, Christmas morning happened over a grainy video connection. The children tore into presents while their daddy watched from a shipping container somewhere in the desert. We laughed, we cried, we waved at pixels and pretended it was enough.

It felt broken. It was broken.

But God showed up in the brokenness.

He was in my parents next door (Mom newly in remission from cancer, Dad quietly carrying groceries so I wouldn’t have to ask). God was in the wives who texted, “I’m coming over—no is not an option.” He was in the church that delivered

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Christmas dinner and the squadron that made sure no deployed kid went without gifts. He was in every light on that too-early tree that I left plugged in so long, whispering the same prayer each night: Lord, let him see these again in person.

That year we learned you can hold grief and gratitude at the same time. You can cry at a memorial service and still buy presents. You can sing “Joy to the World” through tears because the joy is still real, even when your heart is shattered.

What I thought would be our worst Christmas became one of the most meaningful. Stripped of every extra thing, we were left with only what matters: love that refuses to be stopped by distance or danger, faith that keeps showing up when fear screams loudest, and a Savior who is never closer than when the night feels endless.

Friend, if this Christmas feels impossible—if you’re counting days on a deployment calendar, opening presents on a screen, or staring at an empty chair—hear me: Put the tree up early if you need

to. Let the kids sleep in your room. Celebrate in fragments if that’s all you have.

Because sometimes the most beautiful Christmas lights are the ones that shine brightest in the dark.

And they still shine. They always will.

Merry Christmas from one who knows— You are not alone. Hope still wears camouflage, and it is winning. ♥



*CMF wishes all its members a very Merry Christmas. May we celebrate with joy, remembering the greatest gift of all—Jesus.*

## Are You Interested in Becoming a Local Leader?

**Christian Military Fellowship** exists to help you fulfill your calling in Christ to share the hope that is in you with those with whom you interact as part of your daily life.

Briefly, CMF Local Leaders will start, and sustain a CMF fellowship made up of members of the military community in their area. While CMF is an “all ranks” ministry, our area of focus is on enlisted personnel. Local leaders institute and lead the military community in Bible study, prayer, and fellowship,

keeping in communication with participants. They should also seek to build relationships with the chaplains and the chaplain team.

Toward that end we encourage you to study and complete the CMF briefing material:

**Orientation (Brief #1)** that shares an overview of the CMF ministry.

**Developing a Local Ministry (Brief #2)** that shares the Biblical foundation

for and delineates the logical steps in beginning your local ministry.

**Pray and Plan (Brief #3)** that shares the most important activity of all! Asking Jesus what He would have you to do and then being obedient to follow His leading in your local ministry.

If you choose to begin this process, please reach out to us at: [leader@cmfhq.org](mailto:leader@cmfhq.org).

*We’re praying for you!*

### CHRISTIAN MILITARY FELLOWSHIP

An Indigenous Ministry • Discipleship • Prayer • Trauma Healing • Community • Support  
Encouraging Men and Women in the United States Armed Forces, and their families, to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are proud to share that Christian Military Fellowship has earned a 4-star financial efficiency rating from MinistryWatch and maintains Candid.org’s Platinum Seal of Transparency—their highest level. Additionally, Charity Navigator has awarded CMF its top 4-star rating, placing CMF among the most trustworthy and transparent ministries nationwide.

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We are accredited members of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and a Platinum Seal from Guidestar/Candid in order to maintain the highest standards of excellence and accountability.

