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## Miracle of birth, via video

### From an outpost, a Marine witnesses his child's birth

By Javier C. Hernandez, Globe Correspondent | August 8, 2007

BROCKTON -- Deployed to Iraq in March, Lance Corporal Tyrelle Greene, 22, knew he would not be able to return for the birth of his first child. Still, he tried to stay a part of the experience, downloading photos of his wife's ballooning belly and studying the ultrasound pictures.

And on Monday night, as his child was about to be born at a Brockton hospital, Greene, in a way, was at his wife's side. Linked by two-way video, the couple could see each other for the last two hours of labor.

He cued his wife, Melissa, 23, to push, and he counted her contractions, which turned out to be more emotional support than useful. The video delay made his counting a few seconds late.



Lance Corporal Tyrelle Greene (far left), who is currently stationed in Iraq, saw the birth of his first child via video.

Just a minute after midnight, he watched as his 7-pound, 12-ounce daughter Janelle was born.

Yesterday, speaking via video from a military outpost in Al Asad, Iraq, the Marine recounted his joy about the birth and his admiration for his wife for reporters gathered at Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center.

"It was great," he said. "It wasn't as good as being there."

"I can't believe she did something like that," Greene said of his wife, who delivered the baby after 12 hours of labor.

The couple met as teenagers in Brockton and married last October. Last year, they moved to San Diego, Calif., where Tyrelle Greene was stationed. He is a member of the Yuma, Ariz.-based Marine Wing Support Squadron 371.

In mid-February, about a month after learning that his wife was pregnant, Greene was told he would be deployed to Iraq within weeks. The couple knew there was a chance that Greene would be sent to Iraq, but they did not think it would happen so quickly.

After her husband was deployed, Melissa Greene said she often worried about his safety and her ability to go through pregnancy and birth alone.

"A lot of times I'd ask, 'Am I going to be OK doing this by myself? Is he going to be OK?' " Melissa Greene said. "It was very emotional."

Since her husband went to Iraq, she has moved in with family members in Brockton. She took time off from work as a dog groomer and other jobs to focus on being a mom, she said.

In the months that followed, she and her husband exchanged e-mails and short phone calls to check in on "our little hamster," their nickname for the baby.

When her birthing class instructor and other nurses at Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center learned about the couple's situation, they worked with the hospital to find a way to bring Tyrelle Greene into the delivery room.

They discovered the Freedom Calls Foundation, a New York-based nonprofit that links troops abroad to their families at home for free.

To make the connection, the hospital used a recently installed video teleconference system and the foundation's videoconferencing network in Iraq.

Two computer technicians stayed through the night in case the video link stopped working. After doctors gave Melissa Greene anesthesia through an epidural 10 hours into labor, her husband tuned in.

"Seeing his face, being able to hear him, and knowing he could see his daughter being born was just amazing," she said. "I just couldn't believe that he was there."

"It was a hoot," said the couple's doctor, Sandra Chenkin. "I've never seen anything like it."

When Janelle was born, Melissa Greene rotated the baby's face toward the camera, waving one of the infant's arms at her new dad. He waved back. Within seconds, Janelle's eyes closed.

"Is she sleeping already?" Tyrelle Greene asked, according to the video of the birth.

Greene expects to return home from Iraq in October to see his new baby in person.

Despite the miracles of videoconferencing, he said, he still feels like he is missing out.

"I'm still nervous," Greene said. "I feel pretty helpless over here."

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