

## New dad in Iraq watches son's delivery via satellite

By Susan Stevens | Daily Herald Staff  
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It was a touching, intimate moment that occurs nearly a dozen times a day at Edward Hospital in Naperville. A proud dad beamed at his newborn son, swaddled in a blanket and nestled in his mother's arms.

This introduction simply required more than the usual technology.

Sgt. William Chevalier is serving in Iraq, where he's been stationed for the past three months of his wife's pregnancy. A satellite link let Chevalier coach Janelle during her labor Tuesday morning and witness the birth of his son.



Marine Sgt. William Chevalier greets his newborn son Christian via satellite from Iraq. His wife, Janelle, gave birth at Edward Hospital in Naperville Tuesday afternoon.

"It's one of those things that takes your breath away," said Chevalier, a jet engine mechanic with the Marines. "I tend to be talkative, loquacious even, but this stole every word out of my mouth."

Janelle Chevalier, who moved to Naperville to live with her husband's family during his tour in Iraq, said it was tough getting through the final months of her pregnancy without him. Then she saw a newspaper ad for Freedom Calls Foundation, a charity that built a satellite network to link soldiers to their families back home at no charge.

Tuesday morning, William took a 15-minute bus ride across Al Asad Air Base west of Baghdad to log in for the call. In Naperville, next to Janelle's bed at Edward Hospital, William's face appeared on a 20-inch monitor -- through which he could encourage and support her.

Five hours later, their son was born. Christian James weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces, measured 21 inches long and has brown hair, brown eyes, and "really long eyelashes," according to his mother.

"He's so precious," Janelle Chevalier said.

The images were clear enough for William to see how much his son resembles him. And they were clear enough for William's mother, Cheryl Chevalier, to get a real-time glimpse of her son the Marine.

"It's good to see him," Cheryl Chevalier said. "He looks good. He looks healthy."

The video link makes it possible for William to witness his son's first moments in the world, but the experience was bittersweet.

"I feel good I was able to experience this, but obviously I wanted to be able to hold her hand and kiss my wife," he said. "You're happy, but it's also depressing because you know you're not going to be there."

Freedom Calls also will set up a camera at the Chevaliers' home so the couple can talk via video several times a month until William returns to the U.S. in March. Otherwise, Janelle and William will keep in touch via e-mail and phone calls.

When he completes this tour in Iraq, William Chevalier plans to return to work in the private sector. Besides Christian, he and Janelle have two daughters from previous relationships. He's been away from Janelle for a year and a half of their four-year marriage, and it's time to put family first, he said.

"I am privileged to serve my country and to have done something I'll never forget, but it's time to spend some time with my family. I just can't wait to get home."

"I know," Janelle said. "I can't wait for you to get here. Can you see him? He's precious."

"He's beautiful. He is. He looks like his daddy."