

# THE DAILY NEWS

## Connecting half a world away

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BY Chris Mazzolini

### Cpl. Seth E. Kilkuskie sees son for first time using the technology

JACKSONVILLE - Every night, Cpl. Seth E. Kilkuskie closed his eyes and tried to picture what his firstborn son was going to look like.

On Wednesday, his son, Jacobi Emmanuel, was born at Onslow Memorial Hospital. On Friday, Kilkuskie saw his son for the first time - from Fallujah, Iraq.

In a first for the hospital, a Marine half the world away was able to see his newborn son through the seemingly magical abilities of technology. A live Webcam gave Kilkuskie and his fiancé, Marshae Stanton, a chance to see each other and share the first collective moment with their new 7-pound bundle of joy.

"Is that Jacobi right there?" said a smiling and laughing Kilkuskie. Jacobi, for his part, slept through the whole thing.

"This is my greatest day out here so far," he said. "Oh my goodness, that's my son right there, man. He's so small. I'm so happy right now you can't believe. My heart's pounding right now.

"Whoever set this up: This made my tour in Iraq. This is unbelievable. I feel so blessed to be able to see my son right now. I never thought I'd see you while I'm in Iraq. I just like to look at him because I won't be able to see him until I get back."

The Webcam encounter was set up by the Freedom Calls Foundation, a group that's building a communications network to help troops in Iraq and Afghanistan stay in touch with families and friends back home. Providing teleconferences across the seas is their keystone service.

Onslow Memorial got word of it when Kilkuskie's mother called and asked the hospital about the program and if they could get a chance to use it. Tim Strickland, the hospital's public relations director, had never heard of the program, so he began to investigate and made it possible.

It's something that he says is very rewarding for the hospital. And now that they spent the roughly \$5,000 to buy the needed equipment, they can offer the service to other families.

It's the kind of moment families should share together, he said.

"This is a classic example of a family moment," said Strickland. "It's the type of moment that means a lot and will be talked about for years."

Kilkuskie left for Iraq in July. He's currently stationed at Camp Fallujah with the 8th Marine Regiment. He's expected back in about a month.



Don Bryan/Freedom ENC

Cpl. Seth E. Kilkuskie smiles while getting his first look at his son, Jacobi Emmanuel, over a Webcam while he is stationed in Fallujah, Iraq, Friday.

But it doesn't change the fact that he missed his fiancé's pregnancy. And it's thoughts of his loved ones that gets him through it all, he said.

"It gets pretty tough on me because of the job I have to do," he said. "I think about them all the time. I just kept a positive attitude and continue to work. I say my prayers every time I leave the wire."

Stanton, who is taking her son home from the hospital today, said the pregnancy was difficult with Kilkuskie away. But she's thrilled she got the chance to see him.

"I think it's wonderful," she said. "It's a great opportunity for women who have their husbands, fiancés or boyfriends in Iraq. It's been hard because he hasn't been here to experience it. Now he gets to see what I see."

And what he saw was a little boy that just met his dad. Kilkuskie, obviously nervous, peppered Stanton with questions.

"Are his hands pretty small?" he asked, squinting into the camera.

"What? Are you worried about basketball?" she asked, a hint of exasperation in her voice.

"Yeah."

"They'll get bigger," she said.