

# The Gadsden Times

## Across The Miles

By Andy Powell, Times Staff Writer  
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During Marine Cpl. Terry Lambert's first deployment to Iraq, it took him two months to get a letter from home. But Saturday night Lambert, who is from Gadsden and is in Iraq for the second time, was able to see and talk to his wife, Jodilynn, and she was able to see and talk to him while she was in labor to give birth to their first child, Katherine Annalee, at Jacksonville Medical Center.

It will be a Father's Day moment to remember, just a bit early.

The videoconference, using 50-inch television screens, was arranged by Freedom Calls, a non-profit organization that sets up video conferences for families and friends of servicemen and women in Iraq.

John Harlow, president of the organization, said this was the first birth from a hospital that Freedom Calls has assisted with.

Terry Lambert, speaking with The Times via the videoconference, called the experience the ultimate Father's Day present.

"This is definitely the next best thing to being there. Nothing could beat being there, (but) there's no better present than this," he said. "I think it's pretty amazing considering during my first tour it took two months to get a letter."

He explained that in his first deployment, he wasn't stationed in one place. Terry was in Iraq for six months in 2004 and has also been stationed in Japan. He is now stationed at Al Asad Air Base in Iraq near the Syrian border, and working as an intelligence analyst. The base has a Freedom Calls facility that he was able to utilize.

Terry, 21, is a graduate of Emma Samson High School and his wife graduated from Glencoe High School. The couple married in April 2005.



**Photo: GADSDEN TIMES | TAMMY McKINLEY**

Marine Cpl. Terry Lambert speaks to his wife, Jodilynn Lambert, via videoconference from Iraq. Jodilynn Lambert was in labor with the couple's first child at Jacksonville Medical Center. Terry Lambert graduated from Emma Sansom High and his wife is a Glencoe High graduate

Jodilynn Lambert's mother, Jean Ann McMurrey, who is chief nursing officer at the hospital, said via telephone Saturday from her daughter's room that family members knew Terry would not be able to be home for the birth. Her daughter has been staying with her and her husband, Joe, since Terry was deployed in January.

She had asked information technology personnel at the hospital if a Web camera could be used for the birth so Terry could see the baby as soon as it was born. The hospital's IT is provided by Perot Systems.

At the same time, Terry was checking with the Marine Corps about what would be available. Perot Systems and the Marines both contacted Freedom Calls about helping to arrange a videoconference.

McMurrey said Freedom Calls provided the cameras, software and access to the foundation's satellite network, and Perot provided the technical support for the connection.

"We're just excited and waiting for a baby," she said Saturday evening.

Jodilynn Lambert was still in labor late Saturday.

She said earlier in the evening that while in labor, she was able to spend some time catching up with her husband, and it was good to see him.

"I'm kind of blown away," she added. "It still doesn't seem real. It's strange to get to see him after half a year. We've just been talking and catching up with everything the last little bit."

Jodilynn said her due date was June 24 and she had been scheduled to be induced for labor on Monday, but she began having labor pains and came to the hospital Saturday morning.

A television loaned by Handy TV was already at the hospital and was hooked up so she could see her husband.

"I'm happy to be able to see him and for him to be able to watch," she said.

Asked if she thought it was a good Father's Day present, she said, "I think this is the absolute ultimate thing. The only thing that could possibly be better would be him actually being able to be here."

She expects her husband to come home this fall. Until then, she will be sending him a lot of pictures of the baby.

She thanked everyone who helped in putting the videoconference together.

The Freedom Calls foundation has three facilities in Iraq and armed service personnel can keep in contact via telephone and Internet for video conferences free of charge, according to a press release from the organization. It has helped members of the armed services participate in weddings, graduations and other milestone family events.

The press release noted that more than 2,000 soldiers use the Freedom Calls facilities each day. The organization is attempting to raise funds to expand its services to additional bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. More information is available at [www.freedomcalls.org](http://www.freedomcalls.org).