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Marine in Iraq is surprise guest at New Rochelle wedding reception

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NEW ROCHELLE — Kraig Rumsey knew his wedding would be special, but he had no idea that his oldest brother would make a special appearance at the reception from 6,000 miles away.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Kevin A. Rumsey, a chaplain's assistant with the U.S. Marines in Iraq, was at Juliano's restaurant last night with the help of a satellite connection and a 40-inch screen provided by a Brooklyn-based charity that offers free live video links to military families.



Photos by Dave Kennedy/The Journal News
U.S. Marine Petty Officer 2nd Class Kevin Rumsey smiles yesterday live from Iraq as his grandmother, Mabel Brucher, touches his image on the TV screen.

The groom burst into tears when he heard his big brother say, "Hey!" and saw him face to face.

"It's overwhelming," Kraig Rumsey said, as he held the hand of his bride, Kimberly Murdock. "I haven't seen him in two years. Unless he was physically here, it doesn't get any better."

Kimberly kissed her crying husband on the cheek as his brother smiled at him from halfway across the world.

"Kevin! you made him speechless!" a voice shouted from across the room.

"What goes around comes around," Kevin said, sending laughter through the room.

For Kevin Rumsey, the greeting came at 3 a.m. in Iraq, where he would get up four hours later and work a 14-hour Sunday. But a long day on little sleep didn't seem to phase him.

"I'm glad I was here to do this," he said. "I'm glad they were able to pull it off."

Only the bride and Kevin's wife, Patricia Rumsey, knew about the live video feed from the Freedom Calls Foundation. Patricia Rumsey, who drove 10 hours from North Carolina to be at the ceremony, said the live broadcast was a wedding gift to her husband's family.

"It just makes me happy to see them happy," she said. "I love being able to get them, too."

The live video feed also was a gift to Kevin Rumsey, who is on his second tour in Iraq.

He got to see his four children, ages 6 to 14; his brother, Keith Rumsey of Bethel, N.Y.; and their parents, Henry and Diana Rumsey of Middletown, N.Y.

The bride tipped off her new father-in-law on the way to the reception, but Henry Rumsey didn't ruin the surprise for his wife.

"It took a lot for me to keep my big mouth shut," he said.

His silence paid off. Diana Rumsey's eyes widened and her jaw dropped when she saw her oldest son sitting inside an air base about 140 miles west of Baghdad.

"I can't believe it," she said.

Bringing soldiers, sailors and Marines to family weddings, births and other occasions is the business of the 2-year-old Freedom Calls Foundation, said John Harlow, the executive director.

"They can come home from the battlefield for a day," he said. "The ability to keep in touch with their families, it's the most important thing to them."

Kraig Rumsey, who used to live in the New Rochelle area, will now join his bride outside Atlanta, where she has been working for a florist. Henry

Rumsey smiled as he watched his youngest son and new daughter-in-law pose for pictures with Kevin on the screen.

"It's a beautiful, beautiful ending to a great day," he said.