



Marine in Iraq watches son's birth in Milwaukee via satellite

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April Jensen's husband was right by her side when she gave birth to their son, Parker, on Monday evening.

Nick Jensen encouraged April during the hours-long labor and cried when he saw his little boy's pink face and heard his first cry.

But Nick will have to wait two months before he can hold and kiss Parker.

While his wife was giving birth, Nick was watching by satellite video from Iraq. From a laptop in a Freedom Calls Center somewhere in Anbar Province to a laptop in a delivery room at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-St. Joseph in Milwaukee, the Racine couple welcomed their second child in an unconventional — but high-tech — way.

"It meant a lot," April, 24, said Tuesday afternoon during another satellite video hookup with her husband. "It was like having him home for a day."

A sergeant in the U.S. Marines, Nick, 22, has been stationed in Iraq since April 1. He knew he would miss the birth of his son. But Nick was there — virtually — through the efforts of Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare and the New Jersey-based Freedom Calls Foundation, which helps families stay in touch with U.S.



Photo/[Jack Orton](#)

Sgt. Nick Jensen, on a video feed from Iraq, checks in on his wife, April, and their son, Parker, who was born Monday at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-St. Joseph in Milwaukee.

military members for milestone events such as births and weddings.

“At first, it kind of seemed like a home video, like it wasn’t really real,” Nick said.

With the eight-hour time difference, Nick tuned in around 8:30 p.m. Iraq time Monday but Parker wasn’t ready to come into the world yet. So he waited an hour and a half and hooked up again just in time to help April through her labor, cracking jokes and calming her.

Doctors induced labor for April around 11 a.m. Milwaukee time and 21-inch-long Parker arrived around 6 p.m., weighing in at 7 pounds, 4 ounces.

Though the couple compiled a list of their favorite boy names and e-mailed it back and forth over the past three months — each time crossing out one name — it was actually their daughter, Grace, who turns 2 next month, who picked out her brother’s moniker. Nick was present for the birth of Grace.

Also in the delivery room were both grandmothers as well as medical personnel. Delivery nurse Bonnie Marcus snapped a photo of the family with April smiling and holding Parker next to the laptop with Nick looking out at the camera.

“I always take a family portrait, but this is the first with a computer screen,” said Marcus, who has helped deliver almost 4,000 babies. She said about 90% of fathers are present for the births of their babies.

“The birth of a child is a profound event in a family . . . with this technology it was like he was there,” Marcus said.

April held Parker, dressed in a camouflage onesie she bought at Camp Lejeune, as she talked to her husband Tuesday. Parker Nicholas, for his part, slept through the hubbub.

Photos of Parker’s birth had already been e-mailed to Nick, who dutifully forwarded them to friends and family from his laptop in Iraq. After his son was born, Nick got hugs and congratulations from his night shift co-workers in Anbar Province. He’s scheduled to return home in two months.

Though he missed kissing his wife and baby, Nick said, there was one benefit to being 6,000 miles away from his wife’s side and her grasp during the birth.

“My hand wasn’t broken when (it) was done,” he said.