

The Moline Dispatch

Q-C family gets to see Lance Cpl. Womack

By Lindsay Schoon
07/13/2007

EAST MOLINE -- The eight watched a blank television screen with a nervous chill of anticipation. At any moment, the face of Marine Lance Cpl. Jeremy Womack could appear. His family hadn't seen the Marine in more than six months.

All e-mails, phone calls and letters couldn't do what the University of Illinois Extension teleconference could -- put them all in the same room, even if it was via motion picture cameras and monitors.

His mother, Kathie Womack, sat next to his aunt, Lenetta Hamor, waiting to see what he looked like. His older brother, Jared Womack, and his wife, Melissa, wanted to show him their 10-week old son, Jaxon, for the first time. His younger brother Joshua and his girlfriend, Leanne Robb, wanted to show off her bulging, 8-months-pregnant belly.

Regardless of the reason, they all just wanted to see the 25-year-old, who is currently stationed at Al Asad Airfield in Iraq.

When his face finally appeared on the screen at about 3 p.m., they cheered in unison, their hands flowing above them in a wave. Lance Cpl. Womack's bespectacled face beamed back at them and he waved.

The reception was a little bit blurry on both ends, but the Marine quickly made light of the situation. "Does it look like NASA when they talk to the astronaut?" His family at the extension office in East Moline erupted in laughter.



Photo: Gary Krambeck

Jeremy Womack, 25, a Lance Cpl. U.S. Marine stationed at Al Asad Airfield in Iraq, seen on a large-screen TV, gets a close-up look of his 10-week-old nephew Jaxon Womack, son of his oldest brother, Jared Womack, and his wife, Melissa Womack. Holding Jaxon is his uncle, Joshua Womack, Jeremy's little brother, during a video teleconference call Thursday afternoon at the University of Illinois Extension office in East Moline.

He couldn't clearly see his new nephew, Jaxon Womack, but he could quickly recognize his niece, Jaiden Womack, 3. "Hi, Jaiden!" he cooed.

The family brought Jaxon close to the video camera, and Jeremy Womack could finally see him. "He looks just like (his father, Jared). See the ears?" Joshua Womack said as he held Jaxon in his arms.



Photo: Gary Krambeck

Leanne Robb, girlfriend of Joshua Womack, stands in front of the video camera to show how far along her pregnancy is to Joshua's older brother, Jeremy Womack, who is watching by video teleconference in Al Asad Airfield in Iraq on Thursday.

For the next hour, the family joked and shared stories, savoring their chance to just talk. The University of Illinois Extension made teleconferences available Thursday and again today to families of soldiers and Marines in Al Asad and Camp Taji/Cooke. The Womack family's conference was the only one scheduled Thursday.

The video conversation took a bittersweet turn when Jeremy Womack explained to his family that he would be sent to Japan right after his work in Iraq finished, and he wouldn't be home for a visit until Christmas. It was news none of them wanted to hear.

"We don't know how long he'll be there; we're not too excited," Jared Womack said after the conference.

Kathie Womack was happy to see her son on the screen, but she said she will be happier when he comes home.

"I worry when I drive home ... when the phone rings. He says he's OK, but I won't believe it 'til he's out of there."