

THE PLAIN DEALER

Sorry, dad. Iraq time caught me at nap time

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Parma- The GI in Iraq and his son in Ohio met Monday for the first time - and the son was less than impressed.

Calvin Rose IV slept through the whole thing.

Heidi Rose tried to nudge her 9-day-old son awake.

His brown eyes would open and he would fall back asleep again, snuggled next to the copy of dad's dog tags that mom wears around her neck.



Chris Stephens/The Plain Dealer

The boy was oblivious to the father 7,000 miles away, beaming on a wide-screen television and desperate for a baby smile.

Calvin Rose IV, nine days old, yawns as he waits for the teleconference which will allow his dad, U.S. Army Specialist Calvin Rose III, to see his firstborn for the first time in real time. Holding Calvin is his mom Heidi Rose who is wearing a duplicate set of her husband's dog tags.

Father and son connected as best they could for about an hour via satellite in a room at Cuyahoga Community College's Western Campus. Heidi Rose of Hinckley Township showed off their son born June 23 at Medina Community Hospital to her husband at a military base in Al Asad, Iraq.

Mother and son watched side-by-side televisions in the college classroom. One showed dad in fatigues a half a world away and the other showed them what dad was seeing in Iraq.

Calvin III, of Medina, a 20-year-old specialist in an Army medical facility, smiled wide and giggled as his son resisted his mother's gentle prodding.

"How you doing, little man?" dad asked.

Sleeping Calvin didn't answer.

"Oh my God," dad asked his wife. "Is that all he does is sleep?"

"Pretty much," she said.

Calvin III said he was disappointed he couldn't return home to Medina for his son's birth, but managed to listen to the birth over the telephone. He said it was exciting, but a poor substitute for being there.

He said he admires his wife for shouldering the burden of a new child all by herself.

The Ohio-to-Iraq hookup lacked one thing - a sense of touch.

"I really just want to reach out and grab him and hold him real bad," dad said.

Calvin III, who is 20 and black, joked with Heidi, who is 18 and white, about their biracial son. Calvin said he has shown pictures of his son to others who said he looks white.

Heidi said some people have commented on her son's tan. She doesn't explain, she said.

"He's perfect just the way he is," Calvin said.

Freedom Calls Foundation provided the computer and satellite link that allowed this young family's reunion. The foundation, which has been tying families in both countries since 2004, estimates that it arranges between 100 and 200 visits between servicemen and their newborns each month.

The Roses may be among the last such calls unless Freedom Calls Foundation comes up with about \$70,000 to pay its satellite fees for the last six months, said Kathryn Hudacek, director of development for the foundation.

"We'll literally go black in seven days if we don't have the money to pay our bills," Hudacek said.

She said the nonprofit foundation was desperately looking for a corporate sponsor to help keep U.S. troops connected to their families at home.

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