

# THE BLADE

## Marine rides Satellite home to new son

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OK, so it wasn't exactly like walking through the front door and calling out, "Honey! I'm home!"

But hey, there's a war on. People make do.

And for Kenton Dial, a 23-year-old Sylvania Marine now serving his second tour in Iraq, "making do" meant "high tech."

A TV, Web cam, and satellite link were the only means this week for the husband of Julie Dial, 20, to see his newborn son, Christian Kurt.

"Seven months of this," he joked, meaning his USMC Iraq stint, "and then I get to come home and I still won't get any sleep."

Everyone in the room laughed - which meant it got loud, since, at moments that morning, as many as 20 people at once jammed Julie's maternity floor hospital room.

The satellite hook-up was arranged by Freedom Calls, an organization that keeps military families in touch despite separation by war. The nonprofit agency was founded in 2004 by John Harlow, an investment banker-lawyer who became indignant after learning of a U.S. soldier overseas hit by a \$7,000 cell phone bill for calling home.

(For more on Freedom Calls, which is donor-funded and currently facing a financial squeeze, see my Thursday blog post on [toledoblade.com](http://toledoblade.com))

With the video call scheduled for 11 a.m., Kenton's family - wife, parents, sister, mother-in-law, grandparents and, yes, son - joined various and sundry Toledo Hospital staffers and nurses in a spacious hospital room that seemed to shrink as the morning pressed on.

While the older people marveled at satellite technology, Julie took it in stride. After all, she brought her laptop to her scheduled C-section, which amazed her mother-in-law, Cathy DePew:

"An hour after she delivered, she'd already [posted] pictures and [Kenton] already saw them. She had her cell phone in the delivery room and had her mom take some pictures, and after recovery ... she was in the intensive-care unit, sending pictures to MySpace. You know, our generation goes to MotoFoto, but this younger generation, they've got it all figured out."

Everything, that is, except daylight-saving time. Having forgotten to factor in the extra hour after Iraq's recent switch from DST, impatience blanketed the hospital room after the TV screen at 11 a.m. showed nothing but an empty chair in an empty room somewhere in Fallujah. At 11:44,

finally Kenton's helmeted image crossed the screen. "Hey," he said, ducking out of camera range, "hold on. I'll be right back, OK?"

"You'd better be!" his mother said, and though she was teasing, her voice lost no maternal authority across the nearly 7,000-mile distance.

When he reappeared moments later, sans helmet and flak jacket, it was the first time his family had laid eyes on him since he left in March. During all the kidding around, the jokes and the teasing, Kenton sometimes yawned and ran his hands through his hair, less a sign of grooming than fatigue. Most of what he talked about revolved around the near future - he's due back stateside at the end of this month - and life with his wife and new son.

"As a two-time combat veteran," the new father joked, "I'm not afraid of anything."

"Just wait," countered Julie, "until you have to change a poopy diaper."