

# The Phone Call

"Is this Mrs. Smith?" an unidentified male's voice asked me over the phone.

I cautiously answered yes. Was this the phone call I have been dreading since March? For a moment, I thought I was going to be sick.

Then, the best words I have ever heard came through the receiver. "Smith, your wife's on the phone."

At 5:20 a.m. on April 18, my heart leapt to my throat. I had not heard my husband's voice since Feb. 16. For a moment I wondered if his voice would sound the same. I wondered if I remembered his voice at all.

Immediately, what seemed to be a thousand questions flew through my head. The news channel I am now addicted to had not reported anything from his brigade in a week. "Where are you? How are you? Have you been able to shower? Are you eating? Do you miss me? What has taken you so long to call?"

Now, intellectually speaking, I knew why he had not called. Jay has been in a war zone. This fact did not however prevent me from embarking upon the longest one-sided argument with Jay I have ever had.

For weeks I had been silently begging him to befriend a reporter in order to use his or her satellite phone. Yes, I realize how ridiculous this is, but I was actually upset with him for not being more sociable. How dare he be concentrating on his job instead of his wife!

With one sound of his voice, however, I forgot I was so upset with him. Any feelings of anger quickly turned to uncertainty. For several moments, I wondered if he was still the same man I fell in love with. Has this experience changed him? Has the past month hardened him? Will anything from the "homefront" seem anything but trivial to him now that he has been through a war?

I kept my questions to myself. All I wanted him to know was that I was doing well. The Army is on a "need-to-know" basis so I quickly decided, whether rightly or wrongly, that Jay would be too. As long as he is in the desert, Jay does not need to know that termites have been discovered at our house, I have had two flat tires in the last month, his pay has been incorrect for four months, and especially that I have been scared out of my mind.

For 20 glorious minutes I listened to his stories of Baghdad. Protecting my feelings at the same time, he did not share any horrific war stories. Instead he told me of the amazing sights he has witnessed. He told me of Saddam's bombed out palace. He laughed at stories of Uday's (Saddam's oldest son) palace with lions and wealth galore. He even told me of a single lieutenant he would like to introduce to my sister.

Any awkwardness from the first moments disappeared. I was overwhelmed with pride. Over the last month, I have often realized how lucky I am. This was no different. We, as military spouses, are so fortunate to share our lives with such interesting people. I will never see what Jay has seen, but the first-hand account was truly precious.

Unfortunately, the phone line cut out before we were able to say how much we miss each other. I held the phone in my hand for several moments hoping to hear his voice again. The familiar pain of missing him returned.

I waited two months for that wonderful phone call. Now, the waiting starts again.