

A soldier's Christmas story

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As we celebrate Christmas with our families, let us not forget those men and women who are away from home, doing their job that we might enjoy our freedoms. We have enjoyed so much freedom for so long that sometimes we might be in danger of taking for granted the sacrificial costs of preserving it. This Christmas season, let us remember our Marines, Army Soldiers, Coast Guards, Air Force, Navy and Special Forces, - both past and present. Remember also our "first responders" here at home, and all those special people who sacrifice their time, comfort, and sometimes their very lives for us that we might be able to live our lives in relative safety and security.

May we often stop and think and pray for these special heroes. May we in some small way try to pay a tiny bit of what we owe to those who have kept us free. If possible, write a note or give verbal thanks to let them know we appreciate their sacrifices, as well as the sacrifices their families make. And most of all, let us pray constantly for them during this holiday season, and continue to bathe them in prayer in the days ahead. In honor of our soldiers everywhere this Christmas season, I would like to share this poem, "A Soldiers Christmas Story", which I have been told was written by Major Bruce Lovely.

"Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone, in a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone. I had come down the chimney with presents to give, and to see just who in this home did live. I looked all about, a strange sight I did see: No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.

No stocking by mantle, just boots filled with sand. On the wall hung pictures of far distant lands. With medals and badges, awards of all kinds; a sober thought came into my mind. For this house was different, it was dark and dreary. I found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly. The soldier lay sleeping; silent, alone - curled up on the floor in this one bedroom home.

The face was so gentle, the room in disorder - not how I pictured a United States soldier. Was this the hero of whom I just read? Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed? I realized the families that I had seen this night, owed their lives to these soldiers who were willing to fight.

Soon round the world the children would play, and grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day. They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year - because of soldiers like the one lying here. I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone - on a cold Christmas eve in a land far from home. The very thought brought a tear to my eye. I dropped to my knees and started to cry.

The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice, "Santa don't cry, this life is my choice. I fight for freedom. I don't ask for more. My life is my God, my country, my corps."

The soldier rolled over and drifted to sleep. I couldn't control it, I continued to weep. I kept watch for hours, so silent and still. We both shivered from the cold night's chill.

I didn't want to leave on that cold dark night - this guardian of honor so willing to fight. Then the soldier rolled over, and with a voice soft and pure, whispered, "Carry on Santa - it's Christmas and all is secure."

One look at my watch, and I knew he was right. "Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a good night."