

Dad, I  
joined up  
because of  
you

# Unlikely reunions

Son, I  
reenlisted  
because of  
you



Spc. Jason Crews



Sgt. Jack Crews

Three fathers, three sons,  
three special meetings  
half way around the world

## Crews inspires Crews

Spc. Jason Crews of the Tennessee National Guard remembered the many times his father would take him to the armory when he was growing up, even letting him climb on the military vehicles in the motor pool.

It was contagious—Jason followed in his father’s footsteps and joined the Guard, working as a driver.

“He was practically raised in the Guard,” said father Sgt. Jack Crews, a truck commander with Regimental Fires Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). “I joined the Guard in 1988 when Jason was born ... I have a picture of me holding him when I graduated [Primary Leadership Development Course].”

After not seeing each other since August of 2009, the two reunited at Contingency Operating Base Marez, Iraq, May 9.

Fighting back tears, he recalled the letter that Jason sent him while at basic training in August 2008.

“He appreciated me for teaching him responsibility. At the time he thought I was ... being tough on him. But when he got to basic, he saw the [purpose],” Jack said.

Like he had inspired his son to join the Army, his son would inspire him years later: After a 10-year break in service, the 49-year-old father of four decided to reenlist.

Jack said that of all the family reunions, this one topped the list.

“Momma didn’t like it,” Jason said, when asked what she thought about the simultaneous deployments.

However, she won’t have to wait too much longer, as both father and son are coming home soon.

—*Capt. Kevin D. Levesque, Tennessee Army National Guard*

## Catching up in Khost

It’s a stifling 95 degrees when Lt. Col. James Girdley, an Army Intelligence officer assigned to the Indiana National Guard, steps off a helicopter at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

His trip is not over: he must take a convoy to another base on the other side of Khost City, known for Taliban and family feuding in the streets. He’s headed there to see several members of his company receive various awards, including one for his son, Staff Sgt. Ashton Girdley, a mechanic also assigned to the Indiana Guard.

As soon as the convoy reaches the outpost overlooking Khost City, Girdley hops out of the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle to search for his son. He’s not seen him since last year when the company deployed from Indiana.

From out of nowhere, Staff Sgt. Girdley tackles his father with a hug—a family reunion commences.

“It was great seeing my dad in Afghanistan since he is working out of FOB Lightning, which is several hours away by convoy,” says Staff Sgt. Girdley. “The last I heard he wasn’t going to be able to make it down because the Pass (Khost-Gardez) has been too dangerous.”

After touring the camp, the father and son retire to a porch for a cold drink. The two discuss family, food, weather and fire fights. Staff Sgt. Girdley tells his father about one just two weeks earlier.

“The Afghan National Police called us and the Afghan National Army for back-up; they were involved in a fire fight and being overwhelmed by the enemy in Khost City. We quickly rolled out, set up a perimeter around the enemy and returned fire, unloading 6,203 grenades, 150 M4 rounds and over 1,000 M240 rounds.”

Father finds out that son won’t be receiving his decoration today because of lost paperwork. “I will be proud to watch my brothers-in-arms receive theirs,” said Staff Sgt. Girdley.

As the ceremony begins the mood in the air is sombre. The temperature starts to cool with the rain clouds rolling in. Fourteen Combat Action Badges, 12 Combat Infantry Badges, and two Army Accommodation Med-

als are pinned to deserving Soldiers.

After the ceremony, food is served out of a tiny, makeshift chow hall. The Gridley's find a comfortable place to stand and eat since there is limited seating. Conversations start flowing, Soldiers laugh and play games out in the small courtyard before it starts to rain. Even with so much going on, there was a sense of calm and happiness amongst this Indiana family.

*-Airman 1st Class Laura Goodgame, Regional Command East Public Affairs Advisory Team*

## Seizing the moment

There was one combat patch ceremony that Col. Jeff H. Holmes was not going to miss: the one that included his son.

"I haven't been able to attend all the regiment's subordinate combat patch ceremonies, but it was very special for me and I wanted to make sure I was here for it," said Holmes, commander of 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 13th Sustainment Command



Col. Jeff H. Holmes patches his son.

(Expeditionary), stationed at Contingency Operating Base Taji, Iraq.

This proud Tennessee father placed a combat patch on the right shoulder of his son, Spc. Hulon Holmes, a gunner with 3rd Platoon, F Troop, 2-278th ACR.

Col. Holmes said these ceremonies typically happen after 30 days into a rotation.

"It exhibits a lot of respect from one combat veteran to the other, and a significant transition in one's career to put one on," said he said, and added that it's rarer still when a father has a chance to put a combat patch on his son.

"I wanted to seize the moment," he said.

"I didn't expect that this would be able to happen," said Spc. Hulon Holmes. "It was nice to see him in general, but for him to be able to put the patch on me, it was a great moment."

Hulon Holmes said he is proud to serve under his father and could not ask for a better assignment. His father was patient with him, he said, and never pressured him to join the military.

"He left that completely up to me," said Hulon Holmes. "Eventually, it just kind of got to me. I knew it was something that I wanted and needed to do."

*-Sgt. John Stimac, 13th Sustainment Command Expeditionary Public Affairs*

## In-theater family reunions

### Tips...

- Before you embrace, make sure your weapon is on safe
- Be ready to share war stories (where, when, how many and what kind of ammo fired)
- Don't commandeer a vehicle just for the purpose
- Don't go AWOL for it
- Let your commander in on your plans
- If all else fails, try a virtual reunion via the internet

### What to talk about...

- The weather, food in the chow hall, favorite sports team
- What you will do when you get home

### What not to...

- How worried mom or dad is that you're both deployed at the same time
- Mission critical information
- Close calls
- Family problems

# Summer

## Military family

# Discounts

### Museum visits

This summer, more than 600 museums in all 50 states are offering free admission to active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day to show their appreciation for those who are serving this nation. To receive a free visit voucher, click [here](#).

### Amusement parks

With Disney's Armed Forces Salute, available through August, active and retired U.S. military personnel (including active members of the National Guard) or their spouses can purchase Disney's 4-Day Military Promotional Base Tickets for \$99, plus tax, for themselves and up to five additional family members or friends for use at Walt Disney World Resort. All tickets and options are non-transferable and must be used by Sept. 30, 2010. [www.disneyworld.com/military](http://www.disneyworld.com/military)

### Programs for kids

**Operation Military Kids** and **Operation Purple Camps** will sponsor summer camps nationwide for school-age military children. **The First Tee** offers children of Guardmembers programs at a chapter of The First Tee in their community at no charge. And, the **Department of Defense Education Activity** will offer a summer enrichment program at 62 sites worldwide that emphasizes math and language arts skills. To find more family resources visit the **Military Spouse Network**.

**"One percent of Americans may be fighting our wars, but we need 100 percent of Americans to support them and their families"**

*-First Lady Michelle Obama at the National Military Family Association's summit: "When Parents Deploy: Understanding the Experiences of Military Children and Spouses" in May*