

Hope BEYOND THE BATTLE

A Great Dad! *By Cathy Hines*



Cathy, a stay-at-home mom, was born in South Korea. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Speech Pathology from Truman State University and her Master of Arts in Early Intervention from the University of Oregon. She is currently involved in Protestant Women of the Chapel and teaches Sunday school and women's Bible studies. She and Ben, married 10 years, reside in Lacey, Washington. Cathy wrote this essay to nominate Ben, a credentialed Open Bible minister serving as a United States Army chaplain, for the 2008 NFI Lockheed Martin Military Fatherhood Award.

My husband, Benjamin, continually amazes me. All those around him love him – especially our children, 3-year-old Everett and 16-month-old JaeAnn. During the time Ben served in Iraq as a military chaplain he continued to be an excellent father and loving husband, as well as a great chaplain.

During Ben's deployment, the highlight of our son's day was checking the mail. Little Everett would open the mailbox and squeal with excitement as he reached in and pulled out a small envelope. "It's a Daddy letter! It's a Daddy letter! Open it, Mommy! Open it!"

After I opened the envelope he would pull out a 3 by 5 index card with a hand-drawn picture. "Look, Mommy!" he shouted. "It's Daddy and his soldiers riding a Stryker in Iraq!" Unable to read yet, Everett would study the picture for awhile and then add it to a big box filled with his other picture cards. The scenes on these cards depicted activities Ben and our son liked to do together, whatever my husband was doing in Iraq, or simply our family hanging out together. My husband must have carried around index cards in his pocket at all times anticipating a chance to scribble a picture for our son. He sent one every single day.

Ben was also great about communicating. The wait in line to phone home could be one or two hours, just to talk for 10 to 15 minutes. Ben found if he called at 3:00 a.m. Iraq time there was no wait. And since it was daytime in America, our children could talk to him. So once or twice a week Ben would wake up at 3:00 and walk half a mile to the call center.

My husband always thinks of his children first. Often when soldiers come home from a long deployment, their wives hire a babysitter for the first night so the couple can share that night alone. When I asked Ben if he wanted me to make such arrangements he replied, "No, I want to see Everett and



Chaplain (Capt.) Benjamin L. Hines

JaeAnn as soon as I get home. They will enjoy the excitement of the welcome home ceremony when all the soldiers march in."

Ben counsels and prays with many soldiers in Iraq and here at home. Recently, he maintained an ongoing relationship with a military father going through a difficult situation with his teenager, calling for updates and to pray.

Now that he is home, Ben enjoys a regular work schedule. Yet in the evening, instead of watching TV or sitting in front of his computer for hours, he gives the kids his full attention. He brings them to

the dinner table, puts their bibs on them, and helps serve their food – partly to give me a break from being their sole caretaker most of the day (and during deployments) and partly to have time with them

himself. After dinner, he gives them their bath, brushes their teeth, and puts their pajamas on them. Then it is playtime until bedtime.

On weekends he wakes up with the children while I sleep in. He feeds them breakfast, changes diapers, and gets them dressed for a day with dad. He finds fun activities like a trip to the reptile zoo, a visit to the exotic pet store, a day at the dinosaur exhibit, or a romp at the park or indoor gym.

Time is a precious gift many of us guard selfishly. Ben has found it to be the greatest expression of his love he could give our children. He is away from us often – for months at a time – but when he is home, he gives us ALL of his attention.

Sometimes I feel guilty when he has taken care of the children while I've done other things. "You've been babysitting all day," I will say. "Why don't you let me take care of the kids while you do whatever you would like to do?" He replies, "Honey, it's not 'babysitting' when they are your own kids. I'm just being a dad." Well, I don't think he is "just being a dad." I think he is "being a GREAT DAD!"



Ben Hines with daughter, JaeAnn, and son, Everett

