

Why Are Veterans Special
By Mariah Miranda

When I was five, my mother, my brother and I lived in a small apartment on the lower level of a 3 story complex. On a regular night, my brother Joe, would use his upper body strength to lift himself up by the door frame to his bedroom, breathing hard and counting reps. "Private Miranda, go down and give me 15!" he'd yelled at me as I watched TV. I was always reluctant but did them anyway, struggling after the fifth one as he laughed at me, and continued to call me "Private Miranda." Mom laughed when Joe would tickle me 'til I had tears running down my face, and then told us dinner was ready. From then on, I watched my older brother pursue a career of military and watched him make sacrifices to get there.

Many teenage boys see military as a "plan" since they feel their life is going nowhere. My brother, Joe, didn't see it that way though; he knew his dream was the Army. As a child his father, ^{a Hungarian immigrant whose father was} a prisoner of the World War II, taught him the history of war. When he was a pre-teen he read war books and had begun to call himself G.I. Joe, and later changing his name to Joe when he became an adult. As a teenager he was a star athlete on his high school varsity basketball team and at the age of 17 he begged to have his papers signed for basic training. I was only in grade school at the time, but I had looked up to him with admiration as he lovingly chastised me about joining the army when I would be of age. I still remember his camouflage suit lying amongst his dirty laundry on the floor of his room as he'd practice pushups and lifts. For his entire college career he served on several bases, including Fort Benning. He'd made a steady pace up the rankings into a lieutenant and when he was 22, he served his first trip in 2005 to the Middle East. "Just come see me when I bring my men back alive" was what he said the last time he'd have contact with his family, a phone call to his mother on Mother's Day. And since then Joe has

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served overseas in Afghanistan more than 3 times. He is special because he sacrificed his life with his family and his home to be the best lieutenant for his squad.

In our lives, hardships are a common understanding that each of us endure and therefore grow from. But veterans have experienced hardships unlike anything else. The act of leaving home and knowing you may not return is a risk most of them take in order to defend their country. Joe took the initiative to protect our country because he did what he truly believes in, and therefore he, and every veteran, is special.