



### Into the Darkness

Scotty was born in Indiana, moved to Idaho, then to Pasco, Washington. He was one of seven children in a devoutly religious home. Good student, captain of his state champion Pasco High School football team, member of the wrestling team, he wanted to attend an Ivy League School. After being accepted to the Air Force Academy and West Point, he opted for West Point where his older brother would be a senior during Scotty's plebe year. Having an older brother there cut both ways in the harassment department, but he survived and received a degree in Engineering Management with a minor in Environmental Engineering. His plan was to graduate, give the Army their five-year payback, and then go to Harvard or Yale to get a graduate degree from the Ivy League school he had always wanted to attend.

He went to Ranger School. He married Tiffany, his middle-school sweetheart from Pasco. As a young lieutenant he was a STRYKER Platoon Leader, having fun, making a contribution, excited to go to work each day practically applying the leadership skills he learned at West Point. For the little kid turned warrior from Pasco, Washington, things were going his way ..... until April 6, 2005.

The blast sent shrapnel into his brain. Six months into his tour in Mosul, Iraq, a suicide bomber left him temporarily paralyzed, permanently blind, and his life in doubt. He fought back, aided by a unique program, the Wounded Warrior Program, which the Army started in 2004. He was promoted to Captain, intends to stay in the Army for two more years to repay his education, and is still contributing. With Tiffany as a partner, they make talks to church groups and encourage young people with real-life thoughts on perseverance, commitment, dedication and purpose. I had the distinct pleasure of talking to him on the phone, and have never met a more sincere, dedicated, and devout individual. He is the first to say that his and Tiffany's faith have pulled them through an incredibly difficult year and a half. I have the feeling we have not seen the last of Captain Scott Smiley's contributions. We wish him well and thank him and thousands of others for their service to our country.

### Leadership Challenge

I am not going to write about the politics of the war in Iraq. That discussion is being held in a thousand other forums. This column will never go there. However, I will wholeheartedly ask each of us to take five minutes to think about a kid we know in harm's way, or a family who has lost a loved one – maybe a card, phone call or e-mail just to say, "I'm thinking about you."

### Some other thoughts:

I am going to the Auburn vs. University of South Carolina football game Thursday night. Scotty Smiley will never again "see" the Army-Navy game. He also will never see his beautiful wife Tiffany's face nor the children they may have.

- I will probably get mad because the traffic will hold me up for 30 minutes. Those young sailors just learned their tours in Iraq are being extended.

- I am wondering if I will see friends tailgating before the game. There are Moms and Dads wondering if they will ever see their sons or daughters again.
- I will have a burger, fresh off the grill, and a cold beer. That young soldier didn't get to eat today because the storm prevented the resupply.
- There's no better place for people watching than a USC football game. Those young Marines look at people trying to figure who is trying to blow them up.
- At the game somebody will have a child who will cry in my ear. That young Air Force Sergeant would give all the money in the world to hold her crying child just one more time.
- We will talk about wins and losses after the game. That 23-year platoon commander will have to fill out a report on the loss of another young warrior and write the toughest letter he will ever write.
- I will get home around midnight and only get six-and-a-half hours of sleep in a comfortable bed. Lance Corporal Jones will be up all night in a bunker defending the perimeter so his comrades can live.
- I will get up the next morning, take a nice hot shower and put on a clean shirt fresh from the laundry. Corporal Riddle hasn't seen running water in a week, and the only clean thing on his body is his weapon.
- Because of a lack of sleep, I will be shot the next day. Private Fitzpatrick will be shot at the next day, and the next.
- The next day's drive to work will be great if I can beat the traffic. First Lieutenant Jeremy Stocker's drive to work the next day may be over a bomb.
- The next day is Friday. I will have a nice weekend relaxing with grandkids, playing golf, watching the ball games on TV. Sergeant Knight, gunner aboard a gunship, has forgotten what a weekend is and will be working 12-hour days in blistering heat, having missed all his kids' birthdays, ball games, and two Christmases.
- We wish you the best of luck, Capt. Scotty Smiley, and you too, Tiffany, for the sacrifices you have made, and will continue to make. The Greatest Generation had nothing on the two of you. You deserve the very best that life can give.

I encourage your response to these thoughts. [farlgroup@aol.com](mailto:farlgroup@aol.com)

Have a great day!

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