

What is the price of America's freedom?

Freedom is not free by any sense of the word. In America our freedom is paid for by the lives of our United States military, police officers and firefighters.

All Americans should stand up and take notice of our so-called public servants. I think that is such a downgrading term describing our men and women in all branches of the armed forces, police, and firefighter's

I wonder how many of our fellow Americans realize what these people have to sacrifice for us every day they go to work just to do their jobs. They put their life on the line every single day they are on duty to protect and serve our great American nation.

Just a few of the sacrifices that are made are not getting to spend holidays with their children, missing that dance recital, or football game. Their baby's first step or hearing that first word. These are times in their children's lives that can never be brought back because of their constant growth and change. But because of their dedication in the profession they chose, they do this as one of the many things in their personal life that is just gone and missed forever. They dedicate themselves to do this because of their love for their job to protect fellow Americans. And it is not for the pay they receive doing this. And I know the pay is not as much as people seem to think it is and they should be paid a lot more for what they have to do.

We as American citizens take so much in life for granted. We get so caught up in our own day to day lives, that we lose sight of some very important facts of life that really should be taught to our children in this day of terrorists and what sacrifices are being made for their future and the future of their children.

This war on terrorism is far from ever being over it has only just begun.

When these brave young men and women decide to join one of the branches of the military they make a huge commitment. That commitment starts for them when they begin their basic training. Some make it and some do not. But for whatever reason it is not an easy task by no means.

During Pararescue training, the days are long, their strength and mental attitude is pushed to the ultimate breaking point every single minute of every day. If they have the drive and the determination to make it through all of this, then they are sent to protect and serve. This means more time away from family, and putting themselves on the line and in dangerous situations every single mission they are on.

But they do this for the love of their country and what it means to be an American.

I personally know what the cost of freedom is first hand. My family has paid the price with the life of our son Senior Airman Jason Dean Cunningham.

Jason was 26 years old, just graduated from Air Force Pararescue school June 7, 2001. He had a wife and 2 young daughters but made the choice to do a job to save lives, and that is what he did.

Jason was on his first combat mission in Afghanistan and on march 4, 2002 he gave his life so that others may live.

After getting shot twice he made the choice not to treat his own wounds knowing how serious they were and he would die, but to make sure the men he was caring for were moved to a safer location and defending them to the best of his ability.

Because of Jason's constant ambition to further his knowledge of learning anything he could to better himself to save lives he persuaded the air force commanders in Kabul base camp in Afghanistan to get the necessary paperwork done and the proper training needed to carry blood out on missions to be better prepared to be ready in any situation to save lives.

Because of his dedication to his job there are men alive today. Because of this, Senior Airman Jason Dean Cunningham was a true American hero and he lived the motto "that others may live"

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Jackie Cunningham

Proud mother of Jason D. Cunningham