

PRIVILEGED TO PLACE WREATH ON GEORGE WASHINGTON TOMB

By Nathan Berryhill

I do not have just one reason as to why I should be allowed to carry the wreath of flowers at the Tomb of George Washington. I have several. My father was a proud military man who enlisted after high school. He served our great nation with un-diminishing pride and joy until he went home to be with the Lord in July 2009. I lost my father in an unfortunate accident; the nation lost an incredible soldier.

I was blessed to have Matthew D. Berryhill as my father. He taught me what it meant to be free and to understand the risks in obtaining that freedom. My father also helped me to recognize the importance of never taking the freedoms we have for granted. He felt it was a blessing to serve and protect our country. While I may not follow in my father's footsteps, I understand the honor and glory that comes with being an American soldier. He joins the many soldiers that have gone before him, in earning his heavenly wings.

To carry the wreath, would be a profound honor. I would do it in memory of all those who have lost their lives so that I could be free. The honor given to placing the wreath on the Tomb of George Washington is so minuscule in respect to what all soldiers have done for me, past and present. The nation should never forget those who have lost their lives. I will never forget my father, nor others that I have had the pleasure of meeting who work so very hard to preserve the liberties I have been blessed with.

One of the hardest jobs in the military is being a Family member. I, as a son, can recall the long nights my father worked and the months in which he was deployed to Iraq. My father spent a lot of time aboard a ship during his enlistment in the Navy. On occasion, I would have the opportunity to visit him during mealtimes. His face would beam with pride as he showed me where he worked on the ship. My mom would cry the nights before he deployed. It broke my heart to see my mom miss my dad so much. I imagine it was much harder for her than it was for my sister or me. We both were very young and perhaps, did not fully comprehend what my dad was going through or the sacrifices we were making as a family. I understand more now why my dad gave his life for our country and the freedoms we have.

If it were not for the selfless giving of our American soldiers, sailors, and airmen, I cannot dream of what this nation would be like. Nor can I fathom the constant chaos that would ensue worldwide without their protection. They stand a wall so that I may sleep peacefully at night. They stand armed and alert so I do not have to worry about my freedom. They stand ready to protect me at any cost. My life is not any more valuable than theirs, yet our military will die without question for those who are not able to fight for their freedom. Those who serve in our military are my several reasons to do this. I will humbly carry the wreath in their honor. Their sacrifices will live forever in my heart and mind.