

A Tribute

The explosions and gunshots were definitely getting worse. Not only was the enemy advancing, the scatter fire was starting to take a toll on the men. Lieutenant Jim Osborne was running out of options. He ordered the tanks to take out enemy clusters and to destroy the missile trucks coming this way. He then ordered an airstrike of the surrounding area, hoping to finish this soon. He called a general retreat, took out some troops coming from behind a dune, and then retreated himself. He could already hear the roar of the F-16 coming this way. 20 minutes later it was over, but the scene would forever etch itself into Jim's mind. 19 troops dead, and more than 80% of the rest injured. The U.S. would pay dearly for this.

In 1990, most of America knew when we routed Iraq's army. How we got away almost unscathed. Almost. My Uncle, Lieutenant Jim Osborne's unit, the Falcons, was once one of the best fighting units in the Marines. They would infiltrate enemy missile silos, destroy chemical plants, and otherwise make themselves a thorn in the lion's paw. But it all changed during the Gulf War. Their mission was Top Secret: my Uncle still cannot tell me what he did, but they infiltrated Iraq's eastern borders on November 29th, 1989. They stayed hidden for about 6 weeks, not seeing anyone until the enemy just sort of showed up. They ambushed the Falcons and basically slaughtered them. It was horrible, a black mark on America's military record. After that, the Falcons who survived were disbanded, and everyone was sent home.

When my Uncle came home, you could see the shadows beneath his eyes, a haunted, frightening face looked upon you as you gazed back up at him. He had taken a bullet in his arm, which was slung, and a deep scratch etched itself in his face, and he looked old and worn. I was 5½ at the time, and, not understanding what had just happened to my Uncle, I ran to him,

and asked him what happened to his arm. He told me he got hurt, but that he would stay home now. My family came up behind me with tears in their eyes, and they hugged him and told him they loved him. He stayed at my house for about a year after that, trying to get enough to buy a house of his own.

When I was older, he told me what really happened. His troop had come out of some foothills when approximately 300 Iraqi soldiers ambushed them. Jim's troops were slaughtered, and Jim himself was lucky to make it out alive. He would have flashbacks every once in a while afterward, too. It would be horrible to watch him, it was like someone watching a horror movie without anyone else seeing it.

Six years after Jim got back, he got married to Susan Patchler, a woman who knew one of his troops in the Gulf War. They bought a house together, and I think their son just turned 3. Jim had gotten his life together in just six years after being psychologically unfit to live on his own.

And that's why I admire Jim so much. In the Gulf War, he was a brave leader. Afterward, he had the courage to live with his skeletons over and over again. He got his life back.

I don't know if I would have the courage to do that. Jim is so strong, it makes my mother cry every time we talk about it. I fashion my life after my uncle, even though I doubt I would be staying as strong as him. I secretly wish I was. Because someone who works from his lowest point up to a life filled with family and friends is someone who is richer than Bill Gates by far! He earned his life and loves it dearly. He would risk everything if he could save it. I salute you, Lieutenant Jim Osborne. May your bravery and courage be passed on so that someone else may look up to you and yours, and honor them as I do.