

A HERO'S LIFE

(A memorial service for Sgt. Christopher Heflin, a Marine killed recently in Iraq when his military vehicle ran over an explosive device, was held at Parkview Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Paducah, Kentucky, on Wednesday morning. He was the son of Lisa Ellis, a certified nursing assistant who has worked at that center for nearly 16 years. The ceremony was attended by Life Care's chairman and founder, Forrest L. Preston, with special music by his son, Aubrey Preston. The following essay was read at that event.)

Our world today is desperately searching for heroes – men and women who become role models for children and for generations to come, individuals who inspire us and cause us to become greater than we otherwise might have been.

Heroes, however, seem to be in short supply. And so, our culture attempts to manufacture heroes to satisfy the quest. What is a hero?

Let us consider first of all what a hero is not. A hero is not:

- An overpaid athlete who, through the use of steroids, attempts to artificially build his body to take unfair advantage of his competitors.
- A rock star whose mind and body are under the control of drugs.
- A business man or woman who employs unethical tactics and tramples over others to achieve professional goals.
- An office-holder who places personal desires over the welfare of the people he has been elected or appointed to serve.

What, then, is a hero? A hero is:

- One who goes out of his way to help others.
- One who chooses to forego the joy of reuniting with family at Thanksgiving in order to direct the Toys for Tots program because needy children “have got to have a Christmas.”
- One who is a happy person, delighting in the pleasure of the company of others.
- One who loves his country so much that he entered the Marine Corps immediately after graduating from high school.
- One who was ready to go to Iraq to serve his country and the cause of freedom; one who would say “my friends are over there – I need to be over there.”

That's a hero. That's Sgt. Christopher Heflin: A son. A Marine. An American.

His life, though cut short because of the ravages of war, will nobly shine as an example of the price that freedom requires.

--Beecher Hunter