



### Semper Fidelis

My husband, a Marine Corps aviator, and I just finished watching HBO's 10-episode miniseries *The Pacific*, Tom Hanks' latest WWII history lesson. In one scene, a young Marine, stubby pencil in hand, is writing a forlorn letter to his gal back home. The paper is weathered, and you can almost see the tiny, scratched handwriting that will surely end up in a bound scrapbook amid black-and-white photos of scraggly Marines. That was then.

Today, our Marines blog about war. They e-mail loved ones about living conditions and battle experiences. They upload YouTube videos of themselves playing the guitar and singing songs with the dusty Iraqi countryside as the backdrop. Military spouses blog, too, about the pink side of military life, dutifully catalog e-mailed photos and hold back tears as our children Skype with digital daddy, a barely visible pistol strapped over his flight suit.

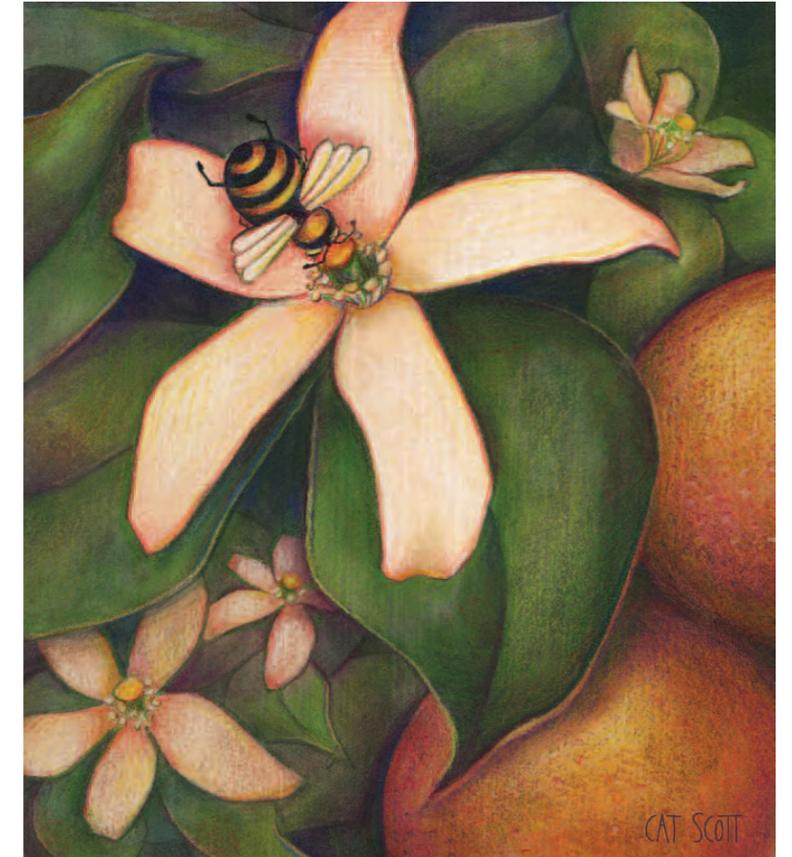
We are beginning to permanently define ourselves by this nearly decade-long conflict, by its numerous deployments and by the constant sense of dread. This is today's war. This is now.

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My husband has deployed to Iraq multiple times. He will likely deploy again. According to reports, there are fewer than 150 Marines in Iraq, and there is talk of an Afghanistan troop drawdown. We will leave eventually. The grunts will pack tents and supplies and gear and come home. Then what? What will happen to our military men, women and families, and for what will we be remembered?

The post-WWII era defined an entire generation that earned itself the moniker "The Greatest Generation." The post-Vietnam era was noteworthy for its less idyllic circumstances. We saw a generation of veterans sent off to an unpopular war only to return to a nation's collective cold shoulder. The Korean War is simply known as the "Forgotten War," and our current conflict is being dubbed "The Long War."

Today, thankfully, our military and their families are, for the most part, respected. The ubiquitous 10 percent military discount. The newspaper articles featuring the heroic triumphs of our wounded warriors. The job opportunities for vets (*Fortune* called soldiers and Marines "the new face of business leadership" in its March 2010 issue). The incredible advancements in prosthetics and treatments for war-related injuries as "IED" became a household word. Our injured Marines now sweat through marathons, swim for miles and bike across our nation in the



—Cat Scott '03  
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names of their fallen friends.

But I wonder what will happen when we are not fighting multiple wars. Will it all go back to the way it was pre-9/11 when the military was more notorious than celebrated? When movies like *A Few Good Men* and *Top Gun* were the only windows into the mysterious military existence?

I worry a little. I worry that the billions spent in Iraq and Afghanistan will cast a shadow on the Marines and soldiers. I want civilians to remember that many of the young men and women now in uniform joined immediately following 9/11. I want them to know that despite the battles, the thousands of dead young people, men and women continue to join our all-volunteer force out of honor, duty and the belief

in the need to protect our freedom.

And in a few years Tom Hanks will probably create another miniseries that reminds us why we fought in the Middle East. It will show the gore and destruction and illustrate why our nation should forever be grateful for the military, their families, the widowed spouses and their beleaguered children. Perhaps my husband will be the gray-haired Marine recounting the flights, the missiles that nearly blew him out of the sky and the fear. The scenes in the movie will be different. More blogging, more women soldiers and, unfortunately, more death.

But the message, as Aristotle reminds us, will be the same. We make war so that we may live in peace. At least some things stay the same.

—Molly Mangelsdorf Blake '96