

Corporal Jeremy Loveless: “I was put on earth to serve.”

Corporal Jeremy Loveless. June 27, 1980- May 31, 2006



When my son, Jeremy Loveless, was about 17 or 18 years old, he came to me and said, “Dad, I don’t know what I want to be, but I know I am here to help people.”

I shouldn’t have been surprised that this teenager already had a commitment to helping his fellow man. The signs had been there since he was a small child. When he was in high school he organized a coat drive to help those in need during the cold, winter months. He and a friend started a chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Gresham High school. Since I was the one buying the refreshments I gauged membership by the number of boxes of donuts they went through at their meetings. They started out with just one box- with leftovers. Lot’s of leftovers. But in no time they were going through more than three boxes, interest in the group had grown that much.

Jeremy was all about the outdoors. Though he didn’t hunt, he was a skilled marksman and outdoorsman. He was an instructor at a ropes course near Highway 26, which is why we chose that location for his memorial sign. He was always there to help.

Jeremy was a person who faced challenges head on. His first real job was as an arborist, and after he mastered that he decided he would take a job as a high rise window washer. I couldn’t believe it because both he and I shared a fear of severe heights. But the owner of the company took him to the top of a very tall building and stood on the ledge, toes overhanging the edge. Jeremy barely crawled to the ledge. But each day his confidence grew, and soon Jeremy was not only comfortable on the edge but was swinging from ropes cleaning windows. I asked

him why he felt compelled to take this on. I mean, there were certainly plenty of other jobs. His response, however, completely describes the essence of Jeremy. He said, "I am afraid of it, so it is time to face it."

Jeremy's good heart was evident from a very early age. He just seemed mature beyond his years. When he was in elementary school he never got into fights, nor could he understand why his fellow students would fight with each other. And even as a child he was always willing to help.

Once I asked Jeremy in an email how he stayed so positive. His simple reply: "It's where I am supposed to be."

Jeremy married Melissa Veley in 2000 and their daughter Chloe was born in 2002. Jeremy was completely devoted to his family.

Jeremy joined the army in 2004 and was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for basic training. After completing basic he was sent to Fort Sam Houston (which incidentally was the same place his grandfather took his AIT). After finishing his AIT, he was assigned to the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team as a combat medic.

I don't know if I would call this a hazing, but new medics have to prove themselves or the other guys will, for lack of a better term, 'run them out'. Jeremy passed the test with flying colors. Stryker vehicles, used to transport troops, have ramps for quick unloading. The medics are supposed to unload last, but not Jeremy. One of his platoon sergeants told me that at first he had to grab Jeremy by the collar and restrain him because Jeremy wouldn't wait- he just wanted to charge out the moment the ramp was down.

As a medic, Jeremy was assigned to ten separate platoons. Typically medics are assigned to only one or two platoons. But the staff sergeant that was responsible for assignments was very impressed with Jeremy and referred to him as 'the go to guy who could fix any situation.' That staff sergeant told me that Jeremy always helped keep spirits up, and was better with only two hours of sleep than most with five hours of sleep.

That staff sergeant told me another story about Jeremy that I would like to share. Apparently the staff sergeant was inspecting troop quarters one day and noticed that Jeremy had a large collection of books, all of which were medical books. Jeremy had been buying them on line with his own money. The staff sergeant ordered Jeremy to stop buying the books himself and said, "I will get them for you!" He and his superiors saw great potential in Jeremy, and because of that he was sent back to Fort Lewis twice to receive advanced training.

I have been telling you about the son I knew and for whom I have deep love and pride. In early December I received an invitation from Jeremy's general to attend the brigade homecoming at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. I decided to go, and it was there that I met another Jeremy- the man who was a friend, a soldier and inspiration to many.

My plane arrived in Fairbanks in the wee hours of the morning, and a first Sergeant was assigned to pick me up. But when I stepped into the airport, expecting to find one sleepy troop holding a sign with my name on it, I was instead greeted by a room full of Jeremy's army comrades, barely a dry eye among them. I had not yet come to terms with my own grief, but had never considered the grief of his army family. I cannot explain how moved I was by this unrestrained, heartfelt display of emotion and legitimate tears.

Over the days that I spent with them I encouraged them to tell me their stories and recollections about Jeremy. I told them they did not need to hold back the truth or build Jeremy up because nothing they could say was going to increase the pain I already had. So they shared with me. Here are a few of the things they said about my son.

- One first sergeant with 15 years of service told me that Jeremy was the finest medic with whom he'd ever served, and that he tried every trick in the book to get Jeremy assigned to him.
- Jeremy was given the nickname, "Doc", and honorary title that wasn't just tossed out casually, but had to be earned.
- There is a long process for naming new military buildings, an honor that is typically reserved for high ranking individuals. Jeremy's name was submitted for the new combat medic training center at Fort Wainwright, despite the fact that he was a corporal. The truly amazing thing about this story is that Jeremy's name made it all of the way to General Brown and Pacific Command, though it was virtually unheard of for an enlisted man to even receive a nomination.
- One of Jeremy's sergeants said to me "Here I was, telling Jeremy what to do and giving him orders, when I am thinking that this guy is twice the medic I will ever be and should be telling *me* what to do."

The time I spent at Fort Wainwright was a true benchmark in my life. I had known Jeremy when he was mine and now I was meeting the man he had become. He had truly cut a wide swath and left enduring marks in many hearts.

I have a tattoo on my arm that is in memory of Jeremy. One day our pastor noticed it and said he would have put, "All heart- All man." That was my son. All heart and all man. I hope you will honor the man he was and his service to our country by approving the highway memorial. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Testimony by Michael Loveless, Father of Jeremy Loveless