

**SOUTH DAKOTA
FALLEN HERO**



*Your
Memory
lives on in
our hearts.*



*In Loving Memory
CPT Christopher Soelzer*



Sturgis, SD

US Army

7-10-1977 to 12-24-2003

Iraq

November 3, 2010

My dear first born son,

How I miss you. At times I think there are no words and then I cannot write fast enough. This letter to you is probably far overdue and yet when I think you are no longer near me, I can't breathe. On that cold Christmas Eve in 2003 seems as though it was just yesterday. I never thought I would be grateful for the years between then and now; for today, I am so much more at peace with your death. You were murdered at the hand of terrorists and even though I know you knew your mission and you served your country with a Patriotism I have yet to know, you chose to go to Iraq at the call of our national security.

I remember you told me that you would never let your Soldiers go into a war zone without their Captain and leader. You taught me about the military and your position. Little did I know that this teaching would actually help me when you were killed and were no longer physically with me.

Remember when I took you to Missouri to attend Kemper Military Academy in June, 1995. It was so hot and humid and then we walked into your assigned room. There was no rug on the floor. I was mortified at the grey floor and the grey walls and just bunk beds and a couple of desks. I was ready to go shopping; however, your commander said that they would take care of the rug and you. I don't think you ever got a rug. Do you remember that you had to sell your plasma in Columbia just to get money for gas to get back to Boonville? How I wish I could have helped you more.

When you would come home on leave, I would have to let you go back and say goodbye again. You would always ask me, "Is it getting easier this time, Mom?" My answer to you was said through tears, "Of course it is - silly me". Oh my gosh, son. It was never easy to say goodbye to you.

When that doorbell rang on Christmas Eve, 2003 at our little cottage on Pine Street in Sturgis, I thought to myself that you had come home and you were surprising me on that holy day. Little did I know that you would never surprise me or any other family member, again. I remember opening the door and seeing you and your smile...then I blinked...and you weren't there. All I remember was hearing, "Ma'am, on behalf of a grateful nation..." and the rest is a blur.

I love you so much Christopher. My Captain, My Captain. You gave me such joy and unconditional love. You were the most forgiving man I know. I see your smile, I hear your laugh. From the moment I held you in my arms on July, 10, 1977 till I said goodbye to you that cold day in January, I am blessed to have been called to raise you. You are my delight.

Always and Forever my baby you'll be,

Mom

When Christopher Frank Soelzer was born on July 10th, 1977, he was not a hero. Through perseverance, kindness, and an undying desire to learn and lead, a hero was created. A wise woman once said, "A hero is somebody who is selfless, who is generous in spirit, who just tries to give back as much as possible and help people. A hero to me is someone who saves people and who really deeply cares." -Debi Mazar

To Chris his family was everything to him. When I say family, I do not only mean his Mother, Father, Sisters and Brothers, the men and women he led in battle were also his family. There was no one Chris would rather go through hell with than his soldiers.

Chris will be remembered for his love of life. He also had a smile that lit up the room and a hardy laugh that will stretch across generations. He was an avid hunter and outdoorsman. When given the opportunity, he would drive through the night to show up unannounced on relatives' doorsteps for his nephew's birthday parties, the birth or baptism of a niece or nephew, or just for the simple fact that he missed them. He had the biggest heart of anyone and he showed how much he cared with whomever he was with.

Chris's life was so much more than what happened on December 24, 2003. That day was just a small dash on his timeline. We are all on this earth to leave a legacy. That is what Chris did with every step he took while he was here. He leaves behind memories that will never grow dim. He taught us life is an adventure and to learn as much as you can while you're here. He left his legacy, now it is up to us to leave ours.