

*Here is my friend.*

*In my brief years of military service, I wore my heart upon my shirt sleeve--the heart of my friend--with fifty stars on a blue field and thirteen stripes of red and white.*

*My friend was there for me from home to Germany and from Germany to Kuwait. And during the long hot drive from Kuwait all the way to Baghdad, my friend stayed with me.*

*When the pain of separation became too much, when the Red Cross message came, when I saw the anguish of my fellow soldiers and felt powerless to help, my friend resting beneath my head as I slept, absorbed the tears, absorbed the pain.*

*For some reason, known only to God Above, there has been little to no freedom in this world in the last 100 years that hasn't be purchased by the blood of the sons and daughters of my friend.*

*He has draped the coffins of my brothers and comrades, and when at last my coffin is lowered into the earth, the last things that coffin will see will be my friend, the sky, and then the earth until God calls me to come forth again.*

*I would never want my friend hurt or disgraced, to be dressed in rags or ribbons. He deserves better.*

*Take care of my friend for me and keep him safe. His life has always been and will always be, much more precious than my own.*