



Holiday Message

I was driving in rough Washington, DC traffic a few months ago when a man in a car rudely pulled over very quickly, almost grazing my front bumper, and stopped in front of me abruptly. I almost gave the driver a universal gesture of frustration, and then caught myself because the gesture is considered reckless driving in Virginia and, more importantly, my oldest daughter (oldest by one minute since she is one of 13-year-old triplets) was watching my every move. Then, without hesitation, she said “WWJD?” I had no idea what she meant so I asked and she explained it was short for “What Would Jesus Do?” It was right then that I realized (and I did not tell her) that I almost proceeded with “WWKD” or “What Would Krapels Do?”

Keith Krapels is my best friend and has been so for roughly 25 years. He has my old position as director of the Modeling and Simulation Division at the U.S. Army Night Vision Lab and he is an outstanding optical engineer. However, he is currently on assignment as Captain Keith Krapels, U.S. Navy, in support of training activities in Afghanistan. It is this time of year (at my holiday party) that I give a short talk to my current division, the Optical Sciences Division at the Naval Research Lab, on our appreciation of military personnel around the world who are tasked with defending our freedom and democracy. It is military personnel like Keith who make this world a better and safer place.

My sister visited Washington, DC, last weekend, and she wanted to go to the Holocaust museum. I had been there before, and I do not like going because it makes one realize how awful we humans can be to one another. But I did go with

her, and I was thankful to understand how much we need our military personnel and how much difference they make in this world. Without them, there is a great deal of suffering and oppression. Without them, a great deal of the world might now be controlled by tyrants with little regard for those more fortunate or less fortunate than themselves.

My appreciation of the military community is solid because my primary job is to provide this community with better tools to do their difficult mission. Also, I realize that the majority of these people do not get to go home for the holidays. They are serving without their families and without the tradition that they long for during this time of year. I have first-hand knowledge of this since I know that Keith Krapels and others like him will not be able to celebrate the holidays with family this year.

Ok, back to WWKD. While Krapels would probably (it is just a guess) go ahead and use the previously mentioned gesture for the benefit of rude drivers, he also defends our country's freedom and democracy. He and his family, like many others around the world who serve their countries, make a sacrifice during the holidays. This time of year, I would like to recognize him and all the military personnel in the world who selflessly defend our freedoms and security with a toast: “Here's to you during this holiday season!” You mean more to us than you know.

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Editor