

What does the Patriot Guard Mission mean to Me? .... By, Scott "Preacher" Mathews

In December of 1986 I attended the Military Funeral of my oldest Brother Michael. Mike had served in the United States Army for 16 Years, He was an E-7 and had done multiple tours in Vietnam, The DMZ in Korea and was currently the Senior Drill Instructor at Ft Benning Georgia awaiting deployment again to where he loved to be, back on the DMZ as the newly minted First Sergeant when he suffered a massive heart attack at the age of 35. During his Full Military Honors, I remember seeing my mother seated in front next to me, I was just 21 yrs. old at the time and serving in the United States Air Force.

The Rifle Volley and Sounding of TAPS raised the hair on the back of my neck. The first time I ever saw a folded Flag presented to a Family member was that US Army Sergeant laying my Brothers Flag in my mother's trembling hands. The words he spoke.... "On behalf of the President of the United States" .... Left no doubt in my mind that my brother's Service to our great Nation was appreciated but more than that, it was Important and needed to be remembered.

Several years later I was working in the steel fab shop and a man came in on his Harley asking if I could design & build him custom Flag holders for it for the Military funeral missions he attended. I built him the holders and then asked him to explain what he did at these Military funerals. After speaking with him I knew I wanted to serve our fallen Veterans in the same manner. Time passed and I met Dan Halverson, we spoke about the American Legion, Patriot Guard Mission, the American Legion Riders, and I knew I had found the missing piece of my puzzle. I attended my very first mission and stood in that Flag line so proud. The Rifle Volley & sounding of TAPS brought me right back to my brother's funeral and seeing the Hero's widow receiving that folded Flag reminded me of my mother so many years prior. I was moved to tears that day and knew this was what I needed to be doing for our fallen Heroes and their Families. In Time I became a Mission Road Captain for the Patriot Guard Mission. I remember the first time I presented a coin to the widow. I had practiced the words I would say to her over and over. I learned the protocols and proper procedures of Military Honors. In my mind I was ready but there was one detail I had missed. When I reached out to present the coin after saying my words so eloquently, I felt the soft warm touch of grandma's hands on mine. Our Hero's wife had grabbed my hands in hers and I looked at her eyes welled up with grieving tears. She gave me a thankful, comforting look and squeezed my hands. I was not prepared for that experience, my eyes quickly welled with tears of my own. I held it together, stood, saluted her, then did an about face and Saluted her Husband, Our Hero.

I will never forget that day or the feel of her hands. I felt the power of what we do to Honor our Fallen Heroes that day and I will forever be thankful to be a Part of the Patriot Guard Mission. What we do is Important, our fallen Veterans Earned the right to be Remembered with Honor & Respect.

What Does the Patriot Guard Mission Mean to Me? I cannot express it in words, It is a feeling in my heart. It is something deeply rooted within me and the way I live my life. I Feel it as we transport our Heroes in motor escorts, At chapel services, Graveside Flag lines and Interment ceremonies. I feel it in the hands that I touch, the tears that well up in my eyes during each mission and I feel it every time I see the Flag of our Nation, The American Flag.

I am Proud to be Still Serving Veterans.