



Family: Susan Stevens

Artist: Leora Platte

Susan Stevens says her life will be better when her husband, Chad, and son, Jonathan, are home from Iraq. Her work as a civilian with the Nebraska National Guard keeps her busy and her support group has been great. She realizes that, unlike those who had family members in previous wars, she is able to communicate with “her boys” by email and telephone. Still, life is challenging. She must do everything herself and evenings can be lonely.

Artist Leora Platte had a military footlocker in mind when she designed her assemblage reflecting Susan’s story. She has carefully chosen its contents. Each piece nestles into its own space. The sculpture tells Susan’s story, but presents it as a universal tale that can be understood on a personal, national or world level.

Leora presents her statement with spare, military specificity, yet it is poetic. This is the way she identifies some of the symbolic references:

“The rock represents:

- Solidity in family
- The place of deployment
- The threat of fracture
- The heart intact

The crate represents deployment in action

The contents of the crate represent the Family Unit:

- The multiple family units with one or two members deployed
- The divisions and inaccessibility of the support group
- Emptiness of home with one or two deployed
- The joy and responsibility of family

The rock:

- The yellow ribbons are the plea for return to peace and the longing for the reunion of families
- The twelve ribbons tied to one strand of ribbon represent each month of deployment
- The position over the globe represents the threat that war places upon humanity
- The yellow yarn is for comfort
- The shape represents Iraq
- The shape represents love

The heart:

- Represents a specific family with two members deployed in Iraq:
- Lt. Col. Chad Stevens, dad, deployed in Iraq
- Susan Stevens, wife and mother
- Jonathan Musilek, Susan’s son, deployed in Iraq
- Diedre, Chad’s daughter”



**Family: Susan Stevens
& Family**

Artist: Leora Platte

The war in Iraq is very real to Susan Stevens. She is a civilian employee of the Nebraska National Guard. Her husband, Lt. Col. Chad Stevens, is stationed in Iraq. Her son, Jonathan, has also been deployed. Mrs. Stevens takes comfort in the fact that the two men can periodically spend time together, like the night of Jonathan's birthday, when they share a pizza far from home. One improvement from past conflicts is that families can communicate by email. Still, Mrs. Stevens sometimes feels overloaded and says she misses her "boys." But her husband says she offers the strength that keeps them going.

Photo: Leora Platte and Susan Stevens

Photo Credit: Alex Zeller

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