

Forrest B. Sibley died in Afghanistan in 2015. To get that phone call from Brent on highway 40 coming into work that am was the worst call I have ever gotten. The pain, hurt, and tears made the call almost inaudible. Infidels had put on Afghanistan personal uniforms gunned him down in cold blood at an Afghanistan checkpoint.

This was a young man who I officiated his high school basketball games, had in my home, laughed with, and was a great part of my life.

In 2016, Brent asked me to join him in Haleyville, Ala to participate in a walk honoring his son. He told me we would be walking at the Mark Forrest Memorial Walk who was another veteran killed in action and this walk honored him every year. I of course said absolutely, yes!

I was encouraged to bring a backpack, extra change of socks, some powder, and walking shoes etc. for the walk. I purchased a dainty little backpack, and all the other items mentioned. Upon arriving at Haleyville High School, I was greeted by Veterans in full rack, boots, etc. I knew immediately something was wrong.

Upon meeting Brent, I asked him what was the course a 5k or 10k. He laughed at me and said no we are walking 35 miles! Letting that sink in was a bit difficult for me, but the competitor in me said I am in.

The first 5 miles were not bad but what followed was up an up and down trip through the state parks hills and the hills of Haleyville, Ala. It was at the 17-mile marker when a veteran asked me was I ok. My reply was a wavering I am not going to stop. He replied we have to keep up and I will not leave you behind! He shouted at me and said, as we approached our next hill, "You will take this hill sir", so put that foot in front of the other and lets move! He asked me if he could take my little backpack from me and I knew I was not long for the world when I said sure.

When we came upon the 18-mile marker, we stopped! This was our stop for lunch! When I sat down I seriously did not think I could get back on my feet! It was at that moment the Commander in charge came over to us, thanked us for our service to Mark and Forrest by participating, and then politely asked us to stand down! It was the greatest words anyone had said all day to me!

You see when we face obstacles in our lives we can decide to give up or move ahead. The lesson learned by me that day was how honored I was to know men and women like Forrest, my son Brock, my nephew Beau, and so many unknown decided to proceed ahead.

Gratitude is my word for each of us today. Feel thankful and blessed that the men and women serving our country today and many years ago decided to move forward and not give up.

James 1: 2-4: My brethren count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1. Learn to stand in the midst of trails
2. Consider it joy to confront the trials
3. Have patience or endurance during your trials

My thought for us today: If God brings you to it; he will bring you through it.

Amen.