

WORLD NEWS TONIGHT WITH PETER JENNINGS (06:30 PM ET) - ABC

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HEADLINE: STORY OF BRAVERY MARINE SACRIFICES HIS LIFE FOR HIS PLATOON

BOB WOODRUFF, ABC NEWS

(Off Camera) Finally tonight, we want to end this Thanksgiving Day broadcast with a story about courage. In every war, there are tales of such stunning bravery, that they are told and retold, and eventually become legend. This story happened just ten days ago in the Iraqi City of Fallujah, where a young marine literally sacrificed his life for his platoon.

BOB WOODRUFF

(Voice Over) Sergeant Rafael Peralta was given a military hero's funeral this week. They packed into the chapel to say goodbye to the 25 year-old marine.

ICELA DONALD, OLDER SISTER OF SERGEANT PERALTA

It's just hard 'cause I know he saved a lot of people. And it's something that I should be proud. But I'm kind of hurt because I needed him. I needed him over here.

BOB WOODRUFF

(Voice Over) It happened during the storming of Fallujah. A marine platoon entered an insurgent safehouse, like this one, Sergeant Peralta was in the lead. The insurgents opened fire and tossed a grenade. Peralta was shot in the face. As his platoon mates scrambled to get out, Rafael Peralta pulled the grenade against his body. Moments later, it blew up.

BECKY DYER, WIFE OF PLATOON MATE

They say in the Bible there is no greater love than a man lay down his life for his friends.

BOB WOODRUFF

(Voice Over) Becky Dyer gave thanks with her parents in Georgia today. Her husband, Brannon, was one of the several marines nearby. Brannon Dyer told reporters in Iraq that Sergeant Peralta saved half his fire team.

BECKY DYER

He saved lives. He made the ultimate sacrifice. I think they're all national heroes. But especially Peralta. Sergeant Peralta, he gave the ultimate sacrifice.

BOB WOODRUFF

(Voice Over) Rafael Peralta was born in Mexico. So anxious to be a US marine, he became one just a day after he got his green card. On the eve of the attack on Fallujah, he emailed his mother. "He never told me he was scared," she says. "He just kept telling me, 'mom, be brave.'" The day after his death, each of his three siblings got a letter from him.

RICARDO PERALTA,

YOUNGER BROTHER OF SERGEANT PERALTA

"If anything happens to me, just remember that I already lived my life to the fullest. And I am happy with what I lived. You, Brother, live your life. Have fun. You still have lots of things to do. Aloha from Fallujah, Iraq."

KAREN PERALTA,

YOUNGER SISTER OF SERGEANT PERALTA

I know that right now, people are really nice and everything. When it's going to be like, one year, or two years, they are going to forget about him. And that's why I mean, right now they are giving medals to my mom for everything. But I know that when it comes to later on, they are going to forget of him, they're gonna forget about him.

BOB WOODRUFF

(Voice Over) But they will not forget.

BECKY DYER

I just want them to know how truly grateful we are and how saddened I am at their loss. And that we are so thankful for what he did.

BOB WOODRUFF

(Off Camera) A remarkable man. A remarkable family. There are many people who believe that Sergeant Peralta deserves this country's highest honors.