

Retired USMC Major Shawn Madden is the father in law of a recruit currently at Parris Island. His daughter, Emily Burch is holding down the homefront while her husband undergoes the most rigorous military training program in the world.

In e-mail, he said, "The Christmas poem set me to thinking of my daughter and her mother who were the ones left behind with all of the heart-ache and hard work that entails. Below is my humble tribute for what they have done and which so often is overlooked or forgotten."

Marine One

She lies alone in a bed meant for two
Her husband, away, far from home
Though he serves she too marks time
For the guardian of our freedoms is
Not only the one, beyond the seas
But the wife, the family-here
She will have friends, neighbors, other wives
Coming by, visiting, sharing-grief, hardships
A sisterhood, shoulders to cry on
Those who remain behind with a task as hard
In many ways
As that of their men, so far away from them

She keeps it together, daily
The children, the home
Waiting, while he does what is needed-freedom's necessity
For the return-soon, maybe soon-
To warmth, comfort (good food!)
Fatherhood, duties of a husband

Her service measured, not in blood
But in double duty, lonely times, missed companionship
Missing a friend, a voice, a touch
Things unprovided by others, family
She soldiers on
In her work, dedicated loneliness

Waiting for him to return (Oh Lord, let him return!)
Wondering if others know
That she has been
Doing as one what two were meant to
Sleeping alone where two should
Hugging with two arms those that remember four

When you see one serving abroad
Look closely, there are two



And if there is no longer two
Realize, oh please realize
What she who remains
Has given
And now must continue to do
As one

By S. C. Madden, Major, USMC (retired)