Why am I a hero?

If I am posed with the question of “Why I am a hero?”, I look at the many people I have had the pleasure of knowing through my experiences in the military and civilian life. Those are persons that I can say are true heroes.

I joined the Air Force with the desire to travel and get an education. What I ended up getting was invaluable. I became a member of a family that looked out for one another while developing and deploying the greatest fighting force in history, but at its core was brotherhood. We bonded together making sure each one looked out for the person next to us both professionally and personally. Even off duty we became as family. Living and working together in like situations developed bonds that last a lifetime.

During my first year of service I found out, through the Red Cross, that I fathered a child and that child was being put up for adoption. Through my military experience I became a different person than I was going into the Air Force. I no longer was a “me, me, me” person. So when this news came I immediately wanted to give my child the best life possible and would not allow him to be given away to the foster care system. I found full support from my commander and his team. I am happy to say that my son (Stephen Jr.) is a fine man serving his country in the Air National Guard.

During my years in the military and after I found the opportunity to volunteer as a coach for youth sports, mainly football and basketball. I was introduced to volunteering by people in the military that are true heroes. They gave their all toward developing the youth and mentoring them so that they can become productive and caring adults. That inspired me to no end, so much so that volunteering has become a staple of my adult life that I am happy to say that my children, the Air Force member, the former Marine, the mother of 2 and the aspiring FBI agent have all taken to in their own way. They are now my inspiration, my heroes.

The military is about taking individuals and bringing them together to make a single like-minded unit that can go into the most difficult of circumstance and come out victorious. This also plays out in life. I have been through the ups and downs of the economy losing more than income and shelter, but I know that I can weather the storm and rise to the top, I have seen the greatest heroes on Earth do it and they inspire me.

I’m no hero, I don’t make a claim to any heroic deeds. I’ve seen true heroism; I can only aspire to be a fraction of who they are, but I am fortunate to have worked with, played with and fathered heroic people that touch the lives of those they meet. I can only attempt to be worthy of their brotherhood by overcoming and becoming victorious.