

Irma McFudd: A woman with NO FEET

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BACKGROUND: Irma McFudd was a 13 year old middle school student in Stafford, VA. Her mother had been an elementary school principal. Her mother, Dr. Arlene McFudd was also a member of the United States Marine Corps Reserves. She was a helicopter pilot and had been activated and deployed to Iraq. She flew medical evacuation helicopters. She had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for her superb work as a rescue pilot. It had been hard on Irma since she had to fill in at home with her mother away. Irma had an older sister Sally who worked as a secretary in the US Senate in Washington, DC and a younger brother Bobby. Her father George was a high school history teacher. Irma had to fill in and help since her mother was in the Marines. Sally her older sister took the train into DC and was away from home almost twelve hours every day. Sally did help on the weekends, but Irma planned all the meals with her father and prepared most of them. Bobby was not much help he spent most of his time on computer games.

Irma had had some trouble at school. Billy Bob a bully in her class had given her a hard time saying women should not be in combat. He said his dad told him the men had to protect the women and that women were a real burden to the real fighting men.

When Irma's mother was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and it was written up in the Free Lance Star Billy Bob told the other kids she did not deserve it. Irma's mother was scheduled to return home, but on her last rescue mission her helicopter was shot down. She managed to land the wounded bird and keep her passengers safe, but her feet were crushed in the crash and the Doctors had to amputate both feet to save her life.

Irma was extremely disappointed that her mother would not be coming home any time soon and that she had been hurt. She worried about it. She had talked with her mother on the phone and her father had visited her mother at the rehabilitation hospital. Irma had a hard time imagining her mother without feet. She had seen some veterans who had prosthetic legs and were running and playing basketball. She remembered her mother playing tennis and dancing.

Irma: I worry about my mother when she comes home.

Billy Bob: Women should not be in the Marine Corps. Didn't I tell you women should not be in combat areas?

Irma: My mother won a Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery.

Billy Bob: The men had to protect her. They should give the medals to them if anyone deserves a medal.

Irma: You don't know what you are talking about. My mom flew more than 75 helicopter flights to rescue wounded Marines and get them to hospitals.

Billy Bob: My dad says...

Irma: Your dad doesn't know squat about what he is talking about.

Billy Bob: My dad was a Marine in Vietnam so he really knows his stuff.

Irma: I talked with my dad and even with my mom on the telephone. I'm scared and worried about how mom will get around without her feet. She used to love to run, play tennis and take long walks.

Billy Bob: So...

Irma: How can she wear a dress with these metal things sticking out below her dress? How can she wear tennis shorts?

Billy Bob: She should never have gone where only men were supposed to go.

Irma: Billy Bob you are so crude you don't know what you are talking about. My mom sent me pictures from Iraq. Women are doing all kinds of things in the Marine Corps. Some carry rifles and go on patrol. I'm proud of my mom.

Billy Bob: Now she is coming home without her feet.

Irma: I worry about how she will adjust. She probably will just sit around and I will bring her things. She has said on the telephone that everything is A Okay and that she is learning to walk and even run. But I worry about the whole thing.

Billy Bob: What will she do. Mr. Snodgrass is the new principal so she can't go back to being a principal at her old school! She can't be a principal without any feet.

Irma: She told me on the phone she wants to go back to her old school. I don't see how she can do that. I don't think she can do anything. She can't dance with my dad like she did in the old days. She loved to play volleyball with us kids. Now she can't do any of that. I don't even know if she can drive her car.

Billy Bob: I told you she should not have gone to war.

Irma: Today dad is driving up to the hospital to bring mom home. I cried all night just thinking about the problems. I can keep on cooking like I have done for the last year, but what will mom do? Will she have to stay in her room? I'm sure she cannot drive. Sally drives, but she is away at work all day. I'm too young to drive. Maybe I can get an exception and get my driver's license early.

Billy Bob: The day you drive a car I will stay at home.

Irma: When dad brought mom home she came into the house and greeted and hugged each of us. She was wearing slacks and had on comfortable shoes. For a minute I thought all the worry was for nothing she didn't crash and lose her feet. But when she sat down her pants leg came up and I saw the metal feet coming out of her shoes. How ugly and sad.

Billy Bob: I guess she will not be a principal again.

Irma: I don't know how she will do it, but she said she would be back in two weeks as the principal at her old school.

Billy Bob: How can a woman with no feet be a principal?

Irma: I don't know. I'm afraid some little kid might trip her and she would fall and hurt herself. She still has to go to rehab twice a week. She told me they are teaching her to play tennis again. I don't know how she does it with those metal feet. The other night she took me into her bedroom and showed me how the feet come off and how she puts them back on. Her legs are scared and ugly looking.

Billy Bob: Big deal...so what!

Irma: I was so happy last night I saw mom and dad dancing to some slow music. I am so happy for them. Mom told me she could do everything she did before the accident it just may take a bit more time. Some days I believe her. I asked her why did it have to happen to her and to our family. She said because we could all take it and live productive lives.

Billy Bob: My dad still says women should stay at home where they are supposed to be.

Irma: My mom tells me about all about the brave women who fought along side the men in Iraq. I am so proud that she served. There are still many things for us as a family to adjust to now that mother is home. I am seeing a counselor to help me understand my mother's needs. My mom is a real mom even if she doesn't have real feet. Yesterday it felt like old times I visited my mother at her school and it seemed like I remember it when I was a little kid. She knows all the little kids and they love her. No one seems to know she has no feet.

PSL My mom got a promotion she is now the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education. She is a lot of fun and a friend to everyone. No one even notices her metal feet. I love my mom. She is the best!