

THE PURPLE HEART'S SISTER

It took 26 hours. For 26 hours a mother mourned the death of her son, a sister mourned the death of her brother, a soldier mourned the death of his captain. It was 26 hours before Nora knew hope for her brother's life.

It was July 23rd 2011, 8 a.m., when 17-year-old Nora Murphy, awoke to the call. She sat up; groggy from the events of the previous night out with friends, normal behavior for any teenager when mom and dad are vacationing in New Hampshire for the week. After a few calls from a comrade at Fort Drum to Nora's parents, she was told that her brother, Captain Jake Murphy had passed in an explosion while on patrol in Kandahar, Afghanistan. It wasn't until 10 a.m. the following day that the family learned that Jake was in fact being flown to a hospital in Germany. One may assume that the first reaction would be relief and gratefulness, but Nora explained that the first thing that came to mind was the family of the boy whom they had mistaken Jake for, because even if it was only for 26 hours for the Murphy family, Nora knows what that feels like.

Hope seemed to dwindle when the parents were flown to Germany and told that Jake would most likely not make it. By August 2nd Jake had been put into a coma and flown to Walter Reed. To make matters worse, Jake was infected with gangrene, causing numerous amputations to both legs.

On September 3rd, Nora walked into a pastel colored room, snaked with cords and constant beeps of machinery. Her eyes slip from mine as she explains, "Seeing him the first time and watching the blanket drop off 2 feet higher than a normal person, and then watching him walk out of the house for work just a couple months

ago... it's like watching a grown up, grow up again." It is one thing to endure the trauma of watching a loved one in pain for months, but the worst part for Nora was watching a man she had admired, learned from, and knew as strong and capable relearn things that were so elementary, "... like 2 + 2."

Today, Jake Murphy is happily married to a woman who stuck by his side throughout the entire journey. Their beautiful baby boy, Nolan, is about 2 years old. Jake has received a purple heart for his bravery, honor and service.