

IN MEMORY OF
CORPORAL LEE SCOTT



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NIKKI SCOTT

Interview by Katy Regan

Nikki, from Walpole St Andrews, Norfolk, lost her husband Corporal Lee Scott, from the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment, when the vehicle he was on was blown up by an IED. He was 26.

I met Lee in 2001 when we worked at the same pub in Kings Lynn. He was in the army then, and we were friends for years, but he would send me lovely letters, and I fell in love with him through his letters - because he was so kind and caring in them. Eventually we got together; he completed my life. He was my soulmate.

In January 2008, after Lee's tour of Iraq, Lee, myself, and our son, Kai moved to Tidworth, Wiltshire where the regiment was posted, and in the February, we got married. I remember that photo (the one pictured) being taken. Lee was saying, "we did it!" We were so excited to be married.

I got pregnant immediately with Brooke and am glad otherwise Lee may never have known her. I loved being an army wife. It's an intense environment in the garrison and I made some amazing mates; in particular, a girl called Laura, whose husband Trev was in the same regiment as Lee (the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment).

We knew when we got married that a six-month tour of Afghanistan was coming up but as the date got closer (June 2nd 2009) I was more worried about how much I'd miss him, than the dangers. The night before he left, Lee took Kai to Toys R Us and brought him this toy McDonalds kitchen. Kai still says, "that's the last present my daddy brought me." He was still packing right at the last minute. He couldn't bear to go. When he left at 2am, we just said, we loved each other, and to be strong. When the door

was closed, I bawled my eyes out.

Myself and the other girls who had husbands on tour, tried to keep each other's spirits up, but you're constantly on edge. Six days before Lee died, one lad from his troop was killed and Lee was very upset. One of the last conversations I had with him, he said: "I'm coming out. I can't do this anymore. It's like WW2." For Lee to say that, it must have been dire because he never wanted to worry me.

When someone dies in the army, the lines go down so that family can be informed. When I got the news, I hadn't spoken to him for five days.

There was always one of us wives that were down, and that day (10th July 2009) was my turn. "You'll hear from him tomorrow" my friends said whilst we were walking our babies in the park, but I was fed up, I missed him, I'd been up with the kids all night. I felt something was wrong.

The day I heard, I was walking back home around 2.30pm to get the car, to pick up Kai from school with Brooke in the buggy, when I saw two cars coming down our cul-de-sac - one driven by a man in an army uniform - and my heart stopped. My first thought was, Lee had been hurt, but as soon as one of them asked if I was Corporal Lee Scott's wife and said, "Can you hand the baby to my colleague?" I just knew. Lee was killed by an IED whilst in his vehicle in Helmand. I worked out, myself and the children were awake at the time it would have happened. I was in shock. The strangest thing was being told this horrendous thing had happened, that he wouldn't be

coming home and yet, there was no evidence of Lee: no coffee cup from the morning, no toothbrush – it was like he was still on tour.

Telling Kai, 5 at the time was so hard. I sat him on the bed, I said: “Daddy can’t come home from Afghanistan now Kai, and he has gone to heaven.” Later that day, he was on the trampoline with Lee’s mate, Chris when he asked “what’s heaven?” We told him it was an amazing place and that daddy had gone there on a rocket. A few weeks later, we were all packed, waiting for our Visiting Officer to take us to Kings Lynn for the funeral, when I went into Kai’s room, he said, “I’m looking for my screwdriver.” I asked “what for?” and he said, “What if daddy’s rocket gets broken?”

I wanted to know everything that had happened to Lee the day he died. When the lines were back up, his friend, Trev contacted me. He told me he’d been at the hospital where Lee was taken in a helicopter, and that he’d been the one to take down his posters and pack his stuff from his room. It was so comforting to know that someone who loved him, did that.

His funeral was packed. Kai and Brooke came in the car with me, Kai said, “why are all these people here?” I said, “Because daddy’s a hero.” I was asked what I’d like Lee to be buried in. At first I wanted shorts and t-shirt, I wanted him to be comfy and I was bitter with the army. But in the end, he wore his Number Ones suit he was wearing at our wedding. I decided, he died for his country

and he would have wanted that.

Nine months after Lee died, I went on holiday to Turkey with the kids. One day, Kai was in the pool and was laughing. I thought how long it had been since I’d seen him laugh and wondered how many other kids who’d lost their daddies or loved ones in battle there were out there, who needed to smile again. This is where the idea for the charity Scotty’s Little Soldiers came from. We provide holidays for families who have lost someone – we have 2 properties – one in Great Yarmouth and one in Blackpool and I love to see families smile when they are there.

There was a time when I felt Lee might still be out there, but as time goes on I realize he’s never coming back. I could be sad constantly, but when you’ve got children, asking for Coco Pops, it’s hard to be. The kids have got their memory boxes and we send lanterns and McDonalds balloons up to him, all the time! I try to not take anything for granted, because everything can change in a moment. I like to think, he’d be proud of how we’re coping and the charity, like I was proud of him.

Scotty’s Little Soldiers, the
charity for children of the fallen.
For more information please visit
www.scottyslittlesoldiers.co.uk
or call 01553 763000



ABOVE

Before: "Just Married!
Amazing moment of the
day that I shall cherish
forever. Mr & Mrs Scott."
2nd February 2008. All
Saints Church, North
Wootton, King's Lynn,
Norfolk.

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After: Same location,
Nikki with their
children, Kai and
Brooke 9/04/2015.



Before They Were Fallen deals with remembrance. Louis Quail and Katy Regan use the power of photography and testimony together, to link memory, the passing of time and loss to create a body of work which pays tribute to all those British soldiers who gave their lives in the Afghanistan conflict.



