

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Kuwait reservist sees daughter's birth online

Joe Seybold watched via a Saddleback Memorial Web cam.

**By GREG HARDESTY**  
The Orange County Register

LAGUNA HILLS - The baby was coming.

Jennifer Seybold knew it.

After more than nine hours in labor, nurses wheeled her into a room at Saddleback Memorial Medical Center in Laguna Hills late Thursday morning.

Her husband was ready.

From the privacy of his bedroom on a military base in Kuwait, Joe Seybold logged on to a secured Web site.

He could hear every sound in the hospital room. He could change the view 180 degrees with a few keyboard strokes.

Two years ago, when his first child was born, the Air Force reservist was in the delivery room with his wife. He coached her for hours through a challenging labor and a Caesarean section.

Joe Seybold was so proud of that day that he saved his hospital scrubs.

Tuesday would be different.

The 41-year-old aerospace engineer had missed Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and his son's birthday since being deployed in late August.

He wasn't going to miss this.

The hospital set up a Web cam in an operating room, since Jennifer had a Caesarean section scheduled for today.

The baby couldn't wait. And the baby didn't need a C-section.



Safe in the arms of mother Jennifer Seybold, newborn Elaina Marilee gets a kiss from aunt Erin Wilhelm. Also on hand Thursday at Saddleback Memorial Medical Center are aunt Colleen Connelly and grandmother Laurie Purcell. A Web cam captured the moment for Elaina's dad, Joe Seybold.

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"Harder! Harder! Now blow out!" a nurse told Jennifer, 30. "Come on, blow out, blow out. You can do it!"

Dating back to at least August, hospitals in Ohio, West Virginia and North Carolina have used live Internet video feeds to beam births to troops overseas, according to published reports.

But Tuesday's one-way feed to the Middle East was a first for Saddleback Memorial,

which paid for the \$300 camera as a trial project.

"I think this is fantastic," nurse Susan Strother said. "Most women whose husbands are deployed videotape the births, but for him to experience this in real time is great."

The hospital will consider beaming births live for other families on a case-by-case basis, spokeswoman Elisabeth Sezonov said.

The Seybolds have been using a Web cam at their Aliso Viejo home to talk since Joe Seybold left to do civil engineering work in the war zone.

Jennifer Seybold's sister, Colleen Connelly, 36, suggested: Why not film the birth?

The Seybolds liked the idea and asked the hospital, and the hospital signed on.

Jennifer felt nauseated when she was wheeled into the operating room. She paid little attention to the camera positioned behind her, off to the side.

Two big pushes.

Then, about 10 minutes later...

"Here she comes, Joe!" Dr. Rachel Lopez said.

A few seconds passed.

"You did it! She's here. She's gorgeous. You have a baby girl."

It was 11:09 a.m.

No one in the room could talk to Joe - or see or hear him. But they could look at a computer monitor to see what he was seeing.

Jennifer's mother, Laurie Purcell, 56, did most of the talking.

"There we go, Joe!" she said. "We know you're there. But it's all about the baby now."

Jennifer's other sister, Erin Wilhelm, 34, cut the cord.

Dr. Lopez held Elaina Marilee up to the Web cam. She also held up the imprints of her feet.

She gave Elaina to Jennifer. The new mom stared into her daughter's face.

"Say something to Joe," Purcell said.

Jennifer turned to the camera.

"I love you," she said. "Wish you were here."

Later, resting in her room, a barely eaten BLT sandwich by her bed, Jennifer Seybold said the experience was priceless.

She talked to her husband on the phone and said she could tell how happy he had been to see the birth live.

She said she feels lucky that his deployment is a relatively short seven months.

Joe Seybold is scheduled to meet his daughter in about six weeks.

In a way, he already has.

"That first impression," Jennifer Seybold said. "You always remember it."



## **Kuwait reservist sees daughter's birth online**

"It was the next best thing to being there."

- Joe Seybold to his wife, Jennifer, on the phone after witnessing the birth of his daughter online

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