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News

Sunday, December 25, 2005 - 12:00 AM

## Couple spends first Christmas together since 2002

Barbara Christiansen NORTH COUNTY STAFF

After three years of marriage, Josh Hallett is finally home for Christmas.

Because of his work in the military, Josh Hallett hasn't been home for Dec. 25 since he and his wife, Katie, married in June 2002.

The first two Christmases Josh missed because his work as a Homeland Security guard in Tooele required him to be away from home.



Those years, the couple celebrated the holiday late.

In June of 2004, Josh left for Fort Bliss, Texas, and six months of artillery training. He left for Iraq in November 2004.

Katie sent a Christmas package to him in Iraq, but because of his moving around, he did not receive it until February.

Finding out how late her husband had celebrated the holiday was hard, she said.

"I love Christmas," she said. "It is my favorite holiday. I love to give gifts out."

The Army "did whatever they could to make things nice for the troops," Josh said. "We also got to call home."

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Finally together on Dec. 25 for the first time this year, the couple is traveling to California to visit Josh's family. It will be the first time he will spend Christmas with family in eight years.

With Josh home, the couple has begun their relationship almost where they started.

"We are still in the honeymoon phase," Josh said.

The two have been able to spend a lot of time together because Josh doesn't start his new job until after the first of the year.

And they've been house hunting.

During the year Josh was in Iraq, there were a lot of things that happened to his family.

His grandmother died; his grandfather was diagnosed with emphysema and his mother found out she had cancer.

Katie battled depression by working to stay busy.

"I have gotten used to entertaining myself and I have no depression now," she said.

For those who are forced to be apart this Christmas, the couple said they have learned a few tips from experience.

"Communication is the hardest, but is very important," Katie said. "I told him everything."

"I would tell people to stick with it no matter how tough it gets," Josh added.

Both said it helps to have the support of Americans for the troops.

"People need to support our troops no matter what," Katie said. "They don't really have a choice. They are doing good over there."

Josh agreed.

"The soldiers need to know that what they are doing is worth it," he said. "They need to know that the American people still stand behind them."

He suggested two Web sites to offer such support -- [anysoldier.com](#) and [soldiersangels.com](#).

He had six different "angels" from around the world writing to him and offering support.

*This story appeared in The Daily Herald on page A1.*

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