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## The Marine in Seat 8C

I was flying from Palm Springs to San Francisco. I sat down in seat 9B. As I watched passengers embark, I noticed a young guy wearing a baseball cap backwards. There was something unusual about his movement. He sat in 8C. I noticed that a large part of his neck was red and that there was what seemed to be a large scare going under his cap. I thought he must have been in a fire. Ouch.....

During the flight, I noticed he had his head down. I peeked between the seats. There was a book on his lap and his eyes were open but he wasn't reading. Something was going on.

When we landed, a flight attendant announced that there were some U.S. Marines on board returning from Iraq. There was polite applause. Now I knew that the guy in 8C was a Marine who had been wounded.

We began to disembark. As he got up, his movement again caught my eye. I got up and as I started walking toward the front, I saw him sitting in first Class. I suspected the flight attendants had upgraded him for the San Francisco to Seattle leg.

As I approached him, I just didn't know what to do or say. I was embarrassed at myself. As I got just behind him, I simply put my hand on his shoulder. It was then that I saw that both his legs were missing and that he had prostheses on both legs.

I was just furious - at all of us. Here was a young, attractive guy who was obviously going home for the first time after losing his legs not knowing what life would be like anymore. Here was a young man who had made an unfathomable sacrifice to keep this country strong. And yet the rest of us just "pursue our happiness" doing almost nothing to keep the country strong and thus free.

I remembered what the President or someone had said while the price of oil was rocketing from \$35 per barrel to over \$70 per barrel. That if Americans just had the right amount of air pressure in their tires, that it would help the country become independent of foreign oil .....I wondered how many persons on that plane had taken the 5 minutes needed to put air in their vehicle's tires.

We say we support our troops but what do we actually do. The sad truth is almost nothing. It's a national disgrace and it's led to our losing freedoms and our becoming less safe. Most of us spent more time and energy getting on the National Do Not Call List than on doing something that keeps the country strong. It's a quiet epidemic.

Our country can't win the war on terrorism - nor do anything else of significance - with only 200,000 of us fighting. We all have to fight. We all have to make small sacrifices which, when done by most of us over our lifetime, will keep us strong and thus free.