

Wars -  
Gulf War Demonstration

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SUNDAY

# No cease-fire on grief

## Local woman loses son to war

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APTOS — When Emma Stephens-Bell came home from work Friday night, she was immediately saddened and scared by the strange car she saw in her driveway.

"I said to myself, 'Whatever's in there, I don't want to know,'" said Stephens-Bell, who had four sons fighting in the Persian Gulf.

She entered her house through a side door and saw an Army officer and chaplain sitting in her living room.

She knew one of her sons had died. Moments later she was told that U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Stephens, 27, had been killed Tuesday as he entered Kuwait City in a tank he was commanding.

The news was tragic confirmation of the uneasy feelings both she and her

daughter-in-law in Houston had been having since the allies invaded Kuwait earlier this week.

"There was a cease-fire, but I just couldn't feel too happy about it," said Stephens-Bell. "I don't know why."

"And (Christopher's) wife, she'd been crying ever since (last) Sunday. She didn't know why."

Christopher was the only one of her four military sons serving at the front lines. Her two oldest sons, Staff Sgt. Edmund Stephens, 31, and Staff Sgt. Willard Stephens, both work in communications. Her youngest son, Sgt. Timothy Stephens, 25, is a driver in a transportation company.

The military officials who delivered the news of Christopher's death told Stephens-Bell that her other sons will be brought back from the Persian Gulf for Christopher's services in Houston. All

four men had been stationed in Germany prior to the war.

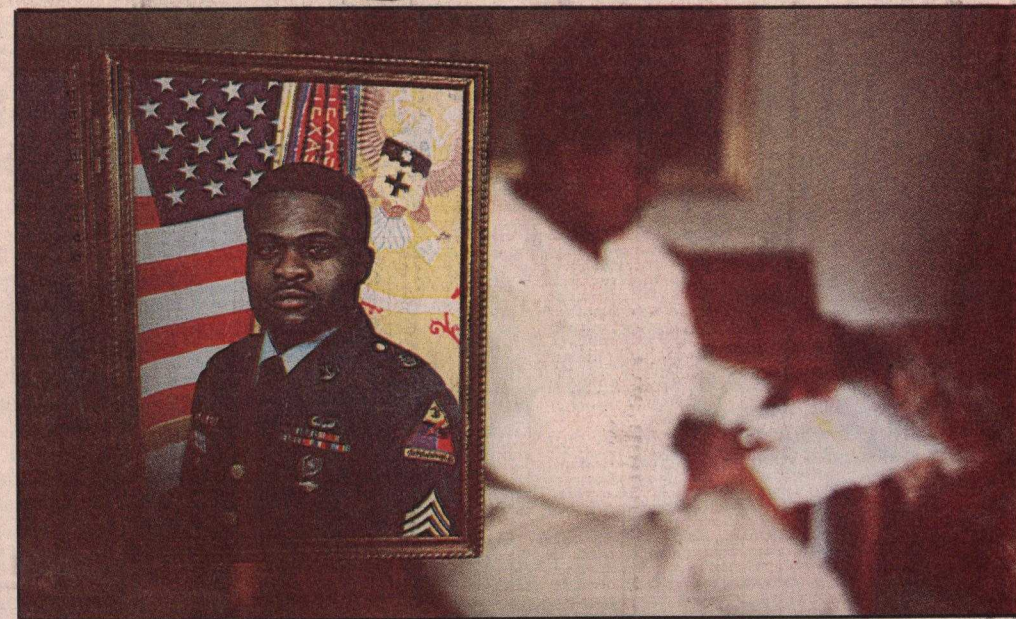
Stephens-Bell moved to Santa Cruz County from Houston four years ago. The last time she saw Christopher was in 1988. She had hoped to travel to Germany in 1989 to spend Christmas with her boys, but that trip had to be canceled when her husband suffered a stroke.

Her sons got together to make a videotape for her before they were shipped to the Gulf. In that tape they told her that going to defend Saudi Arabia was their job.

Christopher, the father of five children ranging in age from 3 to 11 years old, was sent to the Gulf on New Year's Eve. He wrote his mother from there.

"He said if he didn't make it through, don't grieve too hard, because life goes on," Stephens-Bell said. "It's like he had

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Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Emma Stephens-Bell's worst fears were confirmed about her son, Christopher.

## Grief

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a feeling."

Saturday morning she sat in her living room and read from Christopher's latest letter.

"Everyone in my platoon is ready to fight the war," he wrote. "You don't have to worry about me because the Lord is looking over

us."

Christopher Stephens is survived by his wife, Gennie; his four sons, Christopher Jr., Demetrick, Rodrell and Domonique; and his daughter, Alesio.

As other Americans celebrate the end of the war and the appar-

ent of ease of the allied victory, Stephens-Bell said her family is waiting for news of when Christopher's body will arrive in Houston. And waiting to hear when her other sons will arrive there.

For this family, the war will never truly end.