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Tenn. National Guard Soldiers hold impromptu wedding in formation

Nashville- A first for the Tennessee National Guard, two Soldiers were wed on a whim in front of a military formation March 14 at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn.

Pfc. Daniel Dreaden, who had just recently completed his Army advanced individual training (AIT) and was only at his fourth drill with the Tennessee National Guard, married his wife, Pvt. Jessie Moore, during his unit's formation this past Saturday.

Dreaden is assigned to Troop G, 1-230th Air Cavalry Regiment, and Moore to the 777th Maintenance Company, both located in Smyrna, Tenn.

The couple were looking for a pastor to officiate their wedding in October, when they came across Chaplain (Capt.) Howard Avery, who would perform the impromptu ceremony.

"We were looking for a chaplain for our wedding and he said he was able to do it that day," said Moore. "It was a big surprise for everyone."

"He needed witnesses, so we opted for formation," Dreaden said. Since he had to be in formation that afternoon, he contacted his soon to be wife and asked her to come to be wed in front of his unit, and she agreed.

"What better witness than a 1-230th Air Cavalry formation!" said Avery, who performs about five or six wedding ceremonies each year on average. He added, "conducting one in front of a formation was a first for me."

"The chaplain walked up to the formation and announced that we were going to have a wedding today," said Dreaden. "He called my name and my best men to come out of formation and began."

"Spc. De Andre Bell wanted to be the best man, but he was holding the paperwork, so Staff Sgt. Christopher Kain was it," said Dreaden.

"I asked if anyone had just cause why these two Soldiers should not be joined together and nobody spoke, so that's a good sign," Avery joked.

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The couple still plans to hold an official wedding ceremony in October for their family friends and they are hoping Chaplain Avery will be available for the service.

The couple not only married in an unconventional way, they met in an unusual way as well. Moore resided in Florida and Dreaden in Tennessee. They were originally introduced via the video game "Left for Dead."

"We were in the same online clan," said Moore.

"At first, she didn't like inviting me to play with the group because I was so bad at the game," recalled Dreaden. But, after four years of playing together online, they finally decided to meet.

"I was always fascinated with her," he said. "It was love at first sight!"

After meeting face-to-face, they dated for just over a year, traveling back and forth between Florida and Tennessee to see each other.

Video games weren't the only thing the two had in common. The couple also bonded over the military. Moore has two brothers in the Florida National Guard, and her father and grandfather were also in the military. Dreaden has several military family members also.

The couple even decided to join the Army National Guard together, attending basic training and AIT only weeks apart from each other.

"We were supposed to go through basic together, but we got different location and different dates," explained Dreaden. "But we still got to see each other at AIT, although she started a couple weeks before I did."

It was at AIT, on September 6, 2014, that Dreaden popped the question.

"He seemed like he had been having a rough day so I went over to talk to him," said Moore. "He was pacing around."

"I told her I had a surprise for her and asked if she knew what it was," said Dreaden. "She said she had an idea, then I asked her if she wanted it now, knowing what it was, and she said yes."

"She didn't really think I would do it, so after I initially proposed, she said she had to put it on pause for right now, it was too much," he said.

"In the following weeks, I caught a glimpse of a picture of us that she kept in her wallet. There was writing on the back, but I didn't know what it was," he recalled.

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"She later told me she had planned that to happen. While at a restaurant, she let me look at the back of the picture," he said. "On the back it said 'It's always been yes' and was dated shortly after I proposed. She said she had been waiting for a good time." Moore moved to Tennessee in October after their training was completed.

In the Guard, they are putting their video game knowledge to good use; both serve as radio and communications security repairers, and both are sharpshooters in the National Guard.

"The military has always meant a lot to me. I'm glad that we got to do this," said Moore regarding the marriage in front of formation.

"We train together, fight together and go through tough losses together. I feel this was the perfect crowd to witness and celebrate their union as they start their lift together," said Avery.

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Captions:

001 - Pvt. Jessie Moore and Pfc. Daniel Dreaden, both with the Tennessee Army National Guard, pose together after getting married in front of Dreaden's military formation March 14 in Smyrna, Tenn. Dreaden is assigned to Troop G, 1-230th Air Cavalry Regiment, and Moore to the 777th Maintenance Company, both located in Smyrna, Tenn. (Photo provided by Troop G, 1-230th Air Cavalry Regiment.)

002 - Chaplain (Capt.) Howard Avery (right), Troop G, 1-230th Air Cavalry Regiment, performs the official ceremony during the unit's evening formation March 14 at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn. Pfc. Daniel Dreaden has been a member of Troop G for four months. (Photo provided by Troop G, 1-230th Air Cavalry Regiment.)

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