



Master Sgt. Jennifer Loredo speaks with an audience member who was touched by her story after a military family forum Oct. 22, 2013, at the 2013 Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition, in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

# Master Sergeant Talks about Resilience, Strength, Being Gold Star Wife

*By Lisa Ferdinando*

Army News Service

**M**aster Sgt. Jennifer Loredo said she hadn't been looking for love when she first met fellow Soldier Eddie Loredo, though he turned out to be the love of her life. The two Soldiers ended up married.

But in 2010, an improvised explosive device ended Eddie's life while he was on deployment in Afghanistan. The loss devastated his wife.

Loredo, now an Army Master Resilience Trainer, shared her story of love, loss, and resilience during a military family forum Oct. 22 at the 2013 Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C.

When she met Eddie in 2004, Loredo said, they were an unlikely match. She had been a newly promoted





Staff Sgt. Edwardo Loredo talks to his squad before a mission in Afghanistan in the spring of 2010. (Photo courtesy of the Loredo Family)

sergeant first class, and he had been a specialist.

"At the time, I was focused on two things: raising my daughter, and my career," Loredo said. "I had been married and divorced very young and wasn't really looking to be in a relationship or even take a chance on love.

"Little did I know, I would fall head over heels for him and experience things that I thought were only possible in sappy romance novels," she said.

Marriage came. Later, they welcomed the addition of a new family member, a baby named Eddie.

Loredo spoke about the challenges associated with a dual-military marriage. There were the separations and her infantry husband's many deployments to war zones. There was also juggling the responsibilities of being a wife, a Soldier, and a mother of two children.

Loredo, who works now for the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Program, also talked about her devastating loss.

Her husband, Staff Sgt. Edwardo Loredo, who everyone called "Sergeant Eddie," was killed by an IED blast in Jelewar, Afghanistan, on June 24, 2010.

"I lost the love of my life," Loredo said.

## Resilience after tragedy

Loredo was deployed in Afghanistan the same time as Eddie, although they were in different locations. She was flown south straightaway when word came of his injury. He was in a hospital in Kandahar, she said.

"It was the day before his 35th birthday, and I remember the day like it was yesterday," she said. "On that day, my worst fears — the things that we had talked about before each of Eddie's deployments — came true."

By the time she made it to the hospital, it was too late, she said. Loredo ended up escorting her husband's body back to the United States. Though it was the hardest thing she ever had to do, she said she was thankful that she was "by his side every single step of the way."

The days and weeks after his death were a blur, she said. But she will always remember the outpouring of support from her command, Soldiers in her company who were still in Afghanistan, her casualty assistance officer and so many others.

"The support that was given to me and my children was absolutely incredible," she said.

"For the longest time, I thought I knew exactly

what the word ‘sacrifice’ meant, what it felt like. And maybe I did. After all, I was — I am — an American Soldier,” she said.

Now, she is part of the Gold Star family, she said, “one of many, many women who know what seeing their loved one make the ultimate sacrifice feels like.”

She was comforted by the support she received after Eddie’s death. She is dedicated to helping those who follow, she said.

“I can look them in the eye and tell them that they’re going to make it, that America will forever be grateful for their family’s sacrifice,” she said.

### **Strength and resilience moving forward**

Everyone in the Army family should get to know who their Master Resilience Trainer is, she said, and find out when the next training session is taking place.

“Resilience training has given me skills that will

stick with me for the rest of my life and that I have the enjoyment in teaching to others,” she said.

The key to taking care of oneself, she said, is balance, routine, and setting priorities.

“If you don’t take care of yourself, how are you going to take care of others?” she said.

Her life, she said, is the “juggling act.” But she said she’s lost track of how many times she’s fallen off one or all of the wagons of balance, routine, and setting priorities.

“It has not always been pretty,” she said.

Looking back, she said, her 19 years in the Army have been filled with the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, but she believes she is exactly where she is supposed to be in life.

“The one thing that I have going for me is that I’ve gotten back up each and every single time and will continue to do so,” she told the audience at the forum.

“You can too. Let’s do it together.” ■



<https://www.armypress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

