

## **“Worst four days I’ve ever spent!” says mother of soldier in Panama**



**Maxey Duffy with son, Pvt. Johnny Duffy**

When a Crewe woman heard the news that the United States had invaded Panama, her response was different from most in this area. Mrs. Maxey Duffy was afraid. Her 19-year-old son, Johnny, was stationed there!

“Then it all started...the most awful four days I’ve ever spent,” she said. She didn’t know if he were alive, wounded, or dead. The 800 number the Army gave her to call wouldn’t tell her anything. All she could do was wait.

“You were afraid to answer the door, afraid to answer the phone, because you didn’t know how you’d handle it if...”

“I don’t know how mothers who had boys...I can’t call them boys, they’re men after this...in Vietnam and other wars ever made it. It’s the most awful fear!” She had seen so many war

movies of mothers getting telegrams. But this was real!

And there was the frantic search for his face on TV. Her sister called from Richmond swearing she saw him on the news. So they taped every news program trying to get a glimpse of him. But they never saw him.

Then Saturday came and her son’s Colonel called from Florida to tell her Johnny was all right. Since then Mrs. Duffy has not been afraid of the door or the phone. Then his phone call came and put everything right.

He told her he was calling from a bunker being guarded by Marines. A friend of his had been shot in the shoulder, the closest he had come to being injured. Although he was stationed in Panama before the invasion, Pvt. Duffy’s specialty, military intelligence, put him in the action. He said the most “awesome” things he was the combat helicopters flying overhead.

Bobby, 22, he oldest son, who had served in the Marines, was the first to her his brother's voice. "You have the prettiest voice I've ever heard," he exclaimed.

But for their mother, Panama had an entirely different meaning. She kept the pictures of her sons in their proud uniforms on the mantle next to their bronzed baby shoes.

It was as if she had seen her sons born twice, first as her babies, then as men: "You can't call them boys anymore, not after this."

But Mrs. Duffy will tell you...this second labor was the worst.