

# Leeann Tweeden

*Leeann Tweeden hosts NBC's **Poker After Dark** and **The National Heads Up Poker Championship** . She's graced the covers of **FHM** and **Maxim** magazines and appeared in **Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Editions** . In 2008, she received the "**Heart of a Patriot**" award from the **USO of Illinois** for her work entertaining our troops.*

[View Leeann's hand written letter and photos with the troops.](#)

To All Our Men and Women Serving In Uniform,

A heartfelt THANK YOU from a grateful American. I have always counted my lucky stars that I was born in this great nation of ours. If I was born in Afghanistan let's say, I would not have the life that I have been fortunate enough to live. Because of men and women like you, and those that have come before, I have been given freedoms like owning a house, being able to drive a car, and be in the entertainment business as a model and sportscaster.



**Leeann Tweeden**

My father served in the Air Force in Vietnam, as a chief mechanic on B57 bombers in Phan Rang. He told me what it was like to deploy to a place he didn't even know where it existed on a map. He talked about turning 21 and being able to get a beer on base in the Philippines while on leave. And probably the one thing that made the biggest impression on me was his story of having Bob Hope and Raquel Welch visit them in the jungles on a USO Tour!

At the time (I was probably about 8 years old) I didn't understand why Hollywood celebrities would travel into a war zone. My dad explained that the USO and Bob Hope would travel to these locations to 'bring a touch of home' to those who were a long way from it. He said entertainers would go to express their thanks and it would take their minds off the war for those few hours. He still talks about that USO tour to this day...

I remember when I got the first call to see if I wanted to entertain the troops on a USO tour! I couldn't believe it...I just said YES YES YES, hung up the phone and immediately called my dad and said 'guess what?!' Since I have not put on the uniform, I feel like this is my way of serving my country. I feel it's the least I can do to give back to those of you who give so much. The saying of, 'you sign a blank check up to, and including, your life' became very clear to me the first time I traveled into theatre. To date, I have been on 15 USO tours...13 to Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. Some might think I'm crazy, but once you go, you have to go back!

I have visited many of the wounded who have made their way back to Walter Reed and Bethesda hospitals. I am amazed by them every single day. They have to overcome so much, but they do it without complaining and with an inner strength that inspires me. You are not forgotten and we will take care of you!

And one last thing...please thank your families for me too. They serve right along with you and sometimes I think it's harder on them. They're the ones who have to sit at home waiting for your

email or your call. Most of the time they're in the dark about what's happening with you, and hearing things on the news only heightens their fear. I know what it's like to send your loved one off to war. My husband (we just got married on July 4th, 2010!) is a C130 AF pilot who has deployed about 8 times now between Iraq and Afghanistan. He is my hero. And I pray for him every time he's in harm's way. When he's gone, I sleep with my laptop on the bed next to me so I can hear the 'you've got mail' chime in the middle of the night letting me know he made it back to base safe and sound.

Again, I can't thank you enough from the bottom of my heart. You all make me PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN!

With Love and Respect,

Leeann Tweeden