

MIKE and Fran as they embark on a new journey together.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THUNE). The Senator from Ohio, Mr. DEWINE, is recognized.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I thank my dear friend—the now junior Senator from Ohio, who in January will become the senior Senator from Ohio—for those very generous and kind comments.

GEORGE VOINOVICH and I first got to know each other in 1989. I will not repeat the story the Senator recounted, but we got together and formed a partnership that has lasted until today. I gave up my run for Governor and joined with GEORGE as his Lieutenant Governor candidate. We won and, as they say, the rest is history. GEORGE was a great Governor for 8 years. I was his Lieutenant Governor for the first 4 of those years. We worked very closely during that period of time, of course, and after I went to the Senate, when he was still Governor. We have worked even closer since he has been a Senator from Ohio. So I thank him. GEORGE VOINOVICH and Janet are dear friends. They are people whom we care very much about. GEORGE is a great public servant, and I appreciate him very much and am touched, frankly, by his very kind comments.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST ALLEN JAMES KNOP

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor today in remembrance of a brave Ohioan from Willowick—Army SPC Allen James Knop. On November 23, 2005, Specialist Knop died while serving our Nation in Iraq. He was serving with the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, based at Fort Campbell, KY. He was 22 years old.

Specialist Knop is survived by his mother Eileen D'Ercole, his father William Knop, and his siblings Brandon, Rachel, Max, Natalie, and Alison.

Allen graduated from North High School in Eastlake, OH, in 2002. He loved sports—especially golf. His mother Eileen remembers that Allen was extremely charismatic and that he willingly would make sacrifices that helped others. She said, “Blessings come from the heart, and my son had the most wonderful heart of anyone I know.”

As a high school student, Allen developed a strong work ethic. He relished responsibility. His father William does masonry work and often would hire Allen during his summer vacations. William said, “[Al] would work with me in the summer. He was strong. He was thin. And, he was fast. Sometimes my guys would come up to me and say, ‘Hey! That kid works harder than we do!’”

Allen’s father remembers that it was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that motivated his son to enlist in the Army immediately after high school. William worried about the decision, but was deeply impressed by Al-

len’s responses to his questions. This is what Allen said: “Just think, Dad. If everyone thought like you, there wouldn’t be anybody over there fighting now.” Recalling this conversation, William said, “That’s probably the bravest thing I’ve ever heard anybody say.”

Al’s mother Eileen remembers how proud her son was to be in the Army. She said, “He could have gone to any college in the country, but he chose to join for a cause he truly believed in.”

His father also recalls that Allen didn’t have any delusions about war. He understood the danger of combat, but willingly enlisted because he felt such pride in our country. That is simply the kind of person he was.

Allen spent 13 months on combat duty in Iraq—and then reenlisted. His second tour began in August of 2005. His father said that “that tour was hard on him, but he was so proud to serve that he re-enlisted to go back. It meant everything to him. He was a true patriot.”

Still though, Allen knew that re-enlisting worried his family—and nothing meant more to him than his family. So he decided to use a family golfing trip to get a few laughs with them before he left. He showed up dressed in a light-blue leisure suit and talked his younger brother Max into dressing up like Johnny Cash, the Man in Black. William always laughs at the memory. “It’s Al,” he said. “Always goofing around. . . . That’s one of the best memories I’ll have of him.”

It was during this same golf outing that Allen gave his brother Max a special gift. Even though Allen was careful with money and didn’t like to spend it freely, he had recently bought an expensive new golf set and driver for himself. William remembers, however, that when Allen said goodbye and went to drive away, he stopped, turned around, and summoned his brother Max. This is how William describes what happened next:

So he got out of the car and walked over to [me]. He had that driver with him and he said, “Here, Max. Keep an eye on this until I get back.”

Allen’s family and friends will always remember him as someone who was extremely generous, caring, and selfless. Once, during his first tour of Iraq, Allen got a pass to come home for a visit. But he didn’t use it for himself. Instead, he gave it to a fellow soldier whose wife and children were eager to see him. His mother Eileen remembers, “It broke my heart, but he did what was right. How could you argue with that?”

Hundreds of friends, colleagues, and family members attended Allen’s funeral, which took place on a snowy day in Ohio. U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Christopher Davis, Allen’s squad leader during his 2003 tour of duty in Iraq, spoke at the service. This is what he said of Allen:

Rest assured, he will live forever in the tales of heroism that we brothers will tell. . . . Today, Al’s band of brothers are here to pay tribute to one of our own.

Staff Sergeant Davis also recalled that while Allen exhibited tremendous

leadership abilities, he also had the ability to make his fellow soldiers laugh and possessed a unique “lightheartedness and boundless energy.” He said this of Allen:

He was a fierce fighter, and he was quick with a joke. Our unit suffered some very difficult times, but Al was like a beacon. He was the only one that could make me laugh.

During the funeral, Pastor Larry Bogenrief spoke of Allen’s strong faith in God and his commitment to military service. He said that he “was a young man who found a cause he was willing to put his life on the line for.” The Pastor also recalled conversations between Allen and his mother Eileen about the dangerous conditions in Iraq. He remembers how Allen would say, “We’ve been through some pretty close scrapes, Mom. Keep praying for us. I know God is watching over us.”

U.S. Army BG Michael J. Lally III, also spoke at the funeral. “He was a born leader,” he said of Allen. “He had integrity, and he knew what was right.”

Mr. President, Allen Knop will never be forgotten by the friends and family who all loved him so much. He was simply fun to be around. His stepmother Francine Knop remembers he was so close to his family and always happy when with them. She said, “We were absolutely a close family. He was with us during a lot of good times.”

Allen’s father remembers the joy with which his son lived. He said, “Oh, [Al] was always joking, always pulling pranks. He was just a happy-go-lucky guy, and he would do anything in the world for you.”

Allen was close to his grandmother, Alberta Knop. She lived down the street from him, and he’d often ride his bike to see her. “He was just such a good boy, just a good person. He’s just such a sweetheart,” she said. “He’s my hero. I’m very, very proud of him.”

Mr. President, I conclude my remarks with the words of Allen’s father. This is what he said:

I want people to know my son was a brave and honest man, and he was loved by so many people—but nobody more than by his father.

Mr. President, Allen Knop lived his life with a selflessness that is rare. His loss is truly a loss for each and every one of us. My wife Fran and I will continue to keep his family in our thoughts and in our prayers.

SERGEANT DAVID KREUTER

Mr. President, I rise today to remember a brave Marine and a fellow Ohioan who gave his life in service to our Nation—Marine Sergeant David Kreuter, from Cincinnati. On August 3, 2005, Sergeant Kreuter was killed when a roadside bomb exploded under his amphibious assault vehicle. He was 26 years old.

Throughout his life, David loved everything about the outdoors. He enjoyed camping and joined the Boy Scouts as a child. From the time he was a small boy, David had an extraordinary sense of adventure equal only to

his sense of humor. He was simply the kind of person who was always bringing a smile to the face of others.

Mark Wiete, one of David's former Boy Scout troop leaders, remembers that David was always making everyone laugh. "He was always doing funny voices," he said. "He was very animated." And according to his father, Ken, David simply "brightened a room when he came in, and it's that kind of spirit you can't replace."

David graduated in 1997 from St. Xavier High School, where he ran on the cross-country team. After graduation in 1998, he joined the Marine Reserves. His godfather Norm Clarke remembers David's determination to always be the best. "David wanted to do the toughest thing there is," he said, "and the Marines represented that."

As a Reservist, David attended Ohio University and then graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 2004, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice.

In September 2004 after graduating, he married his college sweetheart, Chrystina. Chrystina truly found the love of her life in the dedicated and fun-loving David. He was her rock of stability.

David had always made everyone in his life laugh. It was no different with his fellow marines in Iraq. With friend LCpl Tim Bell, a fellow Ohioan who was killed that same day alongside David, he was always cracking jokes. Despite being overseas and fighting in one of the most dangerous places in the world, David remained a good-natured prankster, someone who could always make his marine brothers smile.

Being a marine meant so much to David. When his tour of duty ended in Iraq, he was hoping to attend Officers' Training School and make the military his career. His friends and family remembered that he loved every part of being a marine—from the uniform he wore to working the most dangerous missions in the most insecure part of the world. "He wanted to be the best," his father Ken remembers. "He wanted to do the hardest thing possible. As far as we can tell, he was involved in just about every major mission or event over there."

David consistently volunteered for his unit's most dangerous missions, even though he knew he might not return. But, you see, David believed in what he was doing and that he was fighting for what he believed was right. During phone conversations with his mother Pat he told her that he could see his marines making such a positive difference in Iraq.

David was passionate about his marines and passionate about his own unit. But he was also passionate about his family. He grew up with loving and devoted parents, and his two younger sisters, Kristin and Laura, adored him, even though he teased them endlessly.

Tragically, David was just beginning his own family when he was killed. According to his mom, "He was going to

be a really good husband and a good father." He and Chrystina had been married less than a year, and she had given birth to their son Christian just 7 weeks before his death. David was looking forward to his return so that he could meet his son for the first time. In one of his last letters home to his sister Laura, he wrote the following:

No matter what, I think we should be home by the first week of October. I will see you then and we can talk about Halloween costumes for Christian.

David was never able to meet Christian in person, but the 7 weeks before his death were full of love and devotion for his son. On telephone calls with Chrystina, David would listen joyfully to the sound of his newborn son's peaceful breathing.

At David's funeral, the Rev. Tim Williams read a letter Chrystina wrote to David after his death. "I promise you," she wrote, "Christian will know you every day of his life and how much you love him. You paid the ultimate price to protect him."

After David's death, there was an amazing outpouring of love and support for his family. One night they returned home from his visitation services, after spending hours meeting with friends and strangers, to find that their neighbors, along with the Oak Hills High School football team, had lined the streets of Miami Township, OH, with mile after mile of luminaries. At David's funeral, hundreds of mourners attended to pay their respects.

I never met David, but I was honored to be asked by the family to speak at his funeral. Everyone I met that day had countless stories about his wonderful sense of humor, his charisma, his devotion to family, and his devotion to country.

Indeed, David was the model of what a marine should be. No matter what challenge he was faced with, he always gave it his best. Once he started something, he wouldn't quit. He was committed to the values of freedom and democracy—the values that we all hold dear, and, in the end, he gave his life so that those ideals will be preserved for all of us. David was a marine through and through—completely dedicated to his mission and to the belief that what he did was right.

When I think of David's life, it reminds me of something President Dwight David Eisenhower once said:

Only our individual faith in freedom can keep us free.

David truly had that faith in freedom and fought so hard to protect it. He didn't fight because he had to; he volunteered. He served in Iraq because this is what he believed in, and because of what he did our world has been made a better place. It is a safer place, both for us and for our children.

Christian Kreuter will grow up in a better world because of his dad. He will be proud of his dad, just as all of us are.

My wife Fran and I will continue to keep the family and friends of Marine

SGT David Kreuter in our thoughts and in our prayers.

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS DANIEL B. CRABTREE

Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute this evening to a fellow Ohioan, Army National Guard SFC Daniel Brian Crabtree from Canton, OH. On June 8, 2006, Sergeant Crabtree died in Iraq when a roadside bomb detonated near his vehicle. He was 31 years of age.

Born in Columbus, Dan, as his family and friends called him, grew up dreaming that some day he would become a soldier. His mother Judy remembers coming home one afternoon to find her 13-year-old son on the phone with a strange adult. That adult was an Army recruiter, and Dan had signed up to join the service in 4 years. "He was just a born warrior," Judy remembers.

Even as a boy, Dan displayed uncommon bravery and courage. His longtime friend Steve Hodges remembers one night in particular when he and some others were making noises outside a camping tent in which Dan was sleeping. Of those sleeping in the tent, Dan was the first to come out to see what the noise was. "Even then," Steve said, "you would recognize the military man Dan was to become."

Dan simply could not wait to help defend his Nation. The only thing that stopped him from serving in the first gulf war is he was too young at the time, even though he tried to get his mother to sign papers allowing him to serve.

Dan joined the Army Reserves in 1992 when he was a junior at Lake High School in Hartville, OH. After graduating the following year, he transferred to the Ohio Army National Guard as an administrative specialist. He later trained as a military police officer and served the 135th Military Police Company in Brook Park. Along the way, he earned his associate degree in criminal justice from the University of Akron.

Dan's entire life was devoted to protecting others. Before defending his country overseas, he worked as a police officer guarding us at home. He was an officer in the Cuyahoga Falls police department for 9 years where he was assigned to the patrol division and was a member of the SWAT team and Honor Guard. Before that, Dan had worked with the Hartville police department for more than a year.

Dan's fellow officers remember him as a dedicated officer who was very comfortable patrolling the streets. They also remember him as a "sweethearted" man who would do anything for his fellow officers and his friends.

"He was young and ambitious, just a good guy," recalled Hartville police chief George Dragovich. "He did a great job."

Although Dan loved being a police officer, family and friends say that military service had always been his passion, particularly the Special Forces. He signed up for the Special Forces just 2 weeks before the terrorist attacks on September 11 and joined the

19th Special Forces Group of the Ohio National Guard in March 2002. He graduated from the vigorous Special Forces qualifications course in May 2004, finally earning that coveted green beret.

Family and friends remember that Dan's determination to succeed in the Special Forces was unmatched. No one worked harder. When Dan was training for the qualifications course, he was also working night shifts as a police officer. But simply being tired wasn't going to keep him from his dream. Instead, he would go for 15-mile runs with a backpack strapped to him—a backpack filled with several pounds of rock.

As an adult, Dan was very much the boy he had once been—eager to serve his Nation. "At the time, he seemed excited to go over," Hartville police sergeant Dan Stiles said, remembering the time Dan was preparing to go to California to train for urban combat before being sent to Iraq. "He was ready to go." When he left for Iraq, his fellow police officers gave him a parting gift—a medal of St. Christopher, the patron saint of travelers.

Dan loved the work he was doing with the Special Forces in Iraq. His civilian knowledge and experience with weapons uniquely qualified him for his mission—and that mission was the development and implementation of a SWAT training program for the Iraqi police force in Al Kut. In addition, Dan simply had a knack for teaching. Even with the members of his own unit, he always took the time to explain things. He was patient and understanding and so very knowledgeable.

A young soldier who trained with Dan in the United States remembers his kindness:

He always stopped and took the time to talk to me. . . . He answered my questions no matter how stupid they were. That was Dan. He was what being a Special Forces soldier is all about.

But Dan was more than a knowledgeable comrade and teacher to his fellow soldiers. He was also a good friend, one who will be remembered with laughter and smiles. His fellow soldiers from the 19th Special Forces Group particularly remember Dan's first jump with the elite troops after he successfully completed the qualifications course. He landed badly, breaking his leg in the fall. One of his friends rushed over to make sure he was OK, only to find that Dan was lying there laughing, even while grimacing from the pain.

That was typical of Dan. That is what friends and family tell. He simply loved being in the Army. He believed in his mission. According to a fellow member of his unit, Dan "died doing what he liked to do."

Dan's death was a terrible blow felt by his entire community. More than 500 mourners, many of whom were uniformed police officers from Hartville and Cuyahoga Falls, attended his funeral to pay their respects to the fallen soldier. Volunteers from nearby police stations took over police officer duties

in Cuyahoga Falls so that almost the entire department could attend the services.

As Cuyahoga Falls police chief John Connally said:

We are just crushed. Everyone at the department is in shock. . . . We're going to miss him for a long time.

Those who attended the service remembered Dan's dedication to the military. Rev. Robert Baker said this:

No one ever went up to Dan and said, "Join the Army, join the Special Forces." It was in his heart. He was a man of uncommon valor and invincible courage.

Hartville police officer John Norman said that his friend was living his high school dream by serving as a member of the Special Forces. "This is what he wanted," Officer Norman said.

Dan also will be remembered as a devoted husband and a father. He loved his wife Kathy and missed her when he was away. According to Officer Norman, Dan was planning to take some vacation time after he returned from Iraq so he could be a stay-at-home dad for several weeks to help Kathy. "He was going to basically put the rest of his life into his wife and family," he recalls.

Steve Hodges, Dan's longtime friend, read a letter at his funeral that he addressed to Mallory, Dan's young daughter. In his letter, Steve remembered the proudest moment in Dan's life had been when Mallory was born. He told her about the things her father had loved, such as playing soccer, Atari video games, and Axis and Allies, a World War II strategy game.

Steve told her that her father had been a "brave and kind" man, someone who deeply loved to help people and deeply loved his country. Steve also read the following words about Dan:

He was worried, Mallory, for your safety. He wanted the best for you—for you to be happy, for you to be able to enjoy the freedoms he loved so much.

Mr. President, Dan Crabtree will be remembered and missed by all who knew him. They will laugh at the memorable things, the funny things he said and did, and they will remember his smile. They will remember that he was a fitness fanatic who practiced kung fu and that he had one of the largest "Star Wars" collections in Ohio, a collection including everything from action figures to DVDs of the movies themselves. Most of all, they will remember the devotion and loyalty Dan had for his family, for his Special Forces, and for his Nation. Dan dedicated his life to serving our country. His actions have earned him more medals and awards than we can list tonight, including the Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart.

I conclude with words from a statement released by Dan's family. This is what Dan's family wrote:

Dan was proud of the career he built in the Army. He was a loving husband, a dedicated and proud father, and a caring son. He was also a soldier who unwaveringly placed our

country before himself. Dan was honored to serve with his fellow soldiers, proud to serve in the United States Army, and grateful to be an American.

Mr. President, Fran and I will continue to keep the family of SFC Daniel B. Crabtree, his wife Kathy, his daughter Mallory, his parents Ronald and Judy, his brother Bill, and his sister Debbie in our thoughts and our prayers.

LANCE CORPORAL BRIAN PAUL MONTGOMERY

Mr. President, this evening I would like to pay tribute to my fellow Ohioan, Marine LCpl Brian Paul Montgomery from Willoughby. On August 1, 2005, Lance Corporal Montgomery, age 26 at the time, gave his life in service to his country when insurgents in Iraq ambushed his sniper unit. He was serving with the Marine Reserve's Third Battalion, 25th Regiment from Brook Park, OH.

His family and friends will remember him most for his contagious smile and his patriotic sense of duty. His father Paul describes him as someone who was "very selfless." Everyone who knew Brian agrees that he died doing what he wanted to do, which was serving his country as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Brian graduated from South High School in Willoughby in 1998. He then went on to become a political science major at Cleveland State University and planned to have a career in law enforcement. At the same time, he was running a small video store in Willoughby with his wife Pamela.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, Brian strongly felt his country was calling him to duty, so he joined the Marine Corps Reserves the next year.

Brian was close to his younger brother Eric, who had idolized his protective older brother while growing up. As young men, the two would become something more than brothers—they would become barracks mates in Iraq. Eric decided to enlist in the Marines when word started circulating that Brian's unit would be shipping to Iraq. Eric said:

The first time I saw my brother in his dress blues, I wanted to do this with him. If my brother was going to Iraq, I was going to serve with him.

In January 2005, Brian and Eric were deployed together in the same unit. While at their base camp in Iraq, they would have long talks about the importance of family, country, and service. Brian told Eric that he had a responsibility to their parents to get him home safe. He said:

I know you will take care of my wife and son if I don't make it, so I have to get you home.

No one was more proud than Brian Montgomery to be a marine. His wife remembers how he loved to show off his marine tattoos in bars. Brian's friend Lesley Bolden, who worked in his video store, remembers that a marine was something he always wanted to be.

In Iraq, even though Brian had been trained as a mortar man, he volunteered for sniper duty. Talking to his

father on the phone, however, Brian always downplayed the danger: "I'm good to go," is the most he would say, but his father knew the truth. "Keep lying to me, Brian," he would say. "We can talk about it when you get home."

When Brian died, he died alongside five other members of his sniper unit. They were really a close-knit group—friends, comrades, and brothers. I would like to share the words of SGT Brian Casagrande, who served with the snipers of the 3-25. This is what he said about Brian:

I recall on numerous occasions after returning from a mission Brian would find Eric to make sure he was OK. 'Monty,' as we called him, would argue a point he didn't even believe, just for the sake of debate.

After Brian's death, Eric's marine brothers rallied around him in support. Eric said that:

From the moment I found out, I couldn't go anywhere without another Marine grabbing me. That was their brother, too.

Their father Paul remembers how much being a marine meant to Brian. He said:

Even though we've had a great loss, it's still very comforting to know he was doing something that he believed very deeply in.

Brian was an outstanding, dedicated, heroic marine. But even more importantly, Brian Montgomery was a loving family man who was devoted to his wife and son Alexander. His wife remembers that she knew she was going to marry him the very day they met. Brian was quite simply the love of her life. She said:

You never believe in love at first sight until it happens to you.

Their son was born a few months before Brian was deployed to Iraq and marked his first birthday just 2 days after Brian was killed. Held in his grandfather's arms, he wore his own Marine dress blue uniform to Brian's funeral.

Brian's wife Pamela says that every day she will tell Alexander about his dad. She went on to say the following:

I'll just tell him what a great man that Brian was, and he's a hero. What he did for his country, for his family, for every American citizen, we will never forget. He'll be proud of his dad.

At a church funeral service in Brian's honor, his father remembered how Brian always put others before himself, how as a small boy he had rushed to help a 5-year-old friend who had fallen and skinned his knee. He also remembered how the shock of the September 11 terrorist attacks prompted Brian to join the Marines. In Paul Montgomery's words, Brian simply "had a deep conviction that he needed to protect his country."

During the funeral, his brother Eric led mourners in a 2-minute standing ovation in Brian's honor. He said that "Brian will always be right here with me, with all of you."

Eric is currently attending the U.S. Naval Academy so he can become a Marine officer. In his brother's memory, he got a tattoo that Brian had always

wanted. It reads: "Never left. Never forgotten."

Indeed, Brian Montgomery will never be forgotten. I had the honor of attending calling hours for Brian. I was able to meet the family and friends for whom he fought. Brian's stepmother Loren was making a giant scrapbook for him when he died. It was filled with the mementos of Brian's life. In it is a picture of the January day that he shipped out. He is cuddling newborn Alexander. There was a giant smile across his face. As Loren said:

I never got to finish it for Brian. I will have to finish it for Alexander now.

In her husband's memory, all Pamela asks is that we support all of our servicemembers. She says:

We need to honor our servicemembers every single day. If you see one, salute them. Or stop in the recruiting office or the VFW and thank them.

Pretty good advice, Mr. President.

Brian Montgomery was a young man with a deep commitment and resolve for service—a young man with an abiding love and dedication to his family, community, and country. Brian was the model of what we all hope our young men and women will become.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep the family of Brian Montgomery in our thoughts and in our prayers.

LANCE CORPORAL DEVON SEYMOUR

Mr. President, this evening I would like to pay tribute to a great soldier and fellow Ohioan, Marine LCpl Devon P. Seymour from St. Louisville, who lost his life on July 9, 2005, when an improvised explosive device exploded near his military vehicle in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq. Devon was only 21 years of age at the time.

Devon was a young man who always knew that he would one day join the military. As a boy, his favorite clothes were khakis and camouflage, and he was an avid collector of model airplanes. During high school, he joined the Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program and attended National Guard summer camps.

His mother Janet says she always knew her son would one day serve his country in the military. According to her, Devon was more interested in military life than he was in sports. She tried to persuade him to join the Air Force or the Army, but he was passionate about being a marine. In her words:

Devon was a stubborn kid, but he was proud, and I was proud of him. I wish I could tell him that now.

From an early age, he displayed the dedication and responsibility that would make him an outstanding marine. His father James remembers how determined his son was to get a dog. He recalls:

Devon wanted a dog, so what he did was he cut pictures out of magazines. Every time you opened a door, there would be a picture of a dog.

It was that same tenacity Devon brought with him into the military, a

career he loved. As his friends have said, the military was just in his blood. His father James was a warrant officer in the Army National Guard, and his uncles were military men as well.

James said that his son decided to become a marine during his senior year of high school after the terrorist attacks of September 11. He believed so strongly in the cause that he talked to a recruiter right after 9/11 but was turned away because he was only 17 years of age at the time.

"He took his birth certificate in, but he was too young," James recalls. The 17-year-old Devon was told to wait until his birthday that November.

Devon joined the Marines shortly after graduating from Utica High School in 2002. His decision did not come as a surprise to Timothy Barrett, who is the principal at Utica.

Devon was doing it not because his dad did it, but because it was the right thing to do. I am sure he had pretty strong convictions about being part of the fight in Iraq and helping secure freedom there.

While waiting to be deployed to Iraq, Devon worked with a tractor supply company in Newark, where he was both a valuable employee and a jokester. According to the manager Dave Butler, he "soon blossomed into a treasured and dedicated employee."

Devon was deployed to Iraq in February of 2005 and was assigned to the Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, out of Akron, OH. He was placed on active duty just 8 months after his father James returned from having served in Afghanistan.

Before leaving, Devon talked to a friend, retired school teacher Ron Thompson. Ron remembers the final conversation very well, and this is what Ron said:

What was going on seemed to be the right thing, and Devon thought he was prepared. He knew it was a job that had to be done. He always struck me as that kind of person—always doing the right thing. I was very proud of him.

From Iraq, Devon often called Dave Butler at the Tractor Supply Company and other coworkers. According to Dave, Devon never complained. In fact, the day before he was killed, he called his mother to wish her well after her birthday. Janet said he told her about a fierce sandstorm and that conditions were bad. But he also defended the mission. "He believed in the cause," she recalled. During the phone call, he also assured his mother that he was fine. "Don't worry, Mom," he said. "But I've seen a lot."

His mother also remembers that he believed in what he was doing. This is how she explained his dedication:

Before Devon left, he said that the Iraqi people had been bullied around and didn't have anyone to stand up for them. He said that was their job, to stand up for them, and he was there to do it.

Janet added:

He was one of the good and decent people willing to help somebody. He was certainly worth knowing.

Devon is missed by all who knew and loved him. His community rallied

around his family as well as the families of the other marines who were killed alongside him. "His death was a tragic loss," said his former principal, Timothy Barrett. "When it's one of your own, it hits home a little closer. This is the first one from our high school to be killed in service. It gives you a deeper appreciation for freedom when it is one of your own who paid the ultimate price."

Mr. President, Devon's father James remembers the fine young man his son became. "He was a good kid," he said. "He was very proud to be a Marine. And, I should say, we were very proud of him."

The world is a better place because Devon lived in it. A young man with a great sense of compassion, a tremendous dedication to his family, community, and country, he is missed by all who knew and loved him.

MACHINIST'S MATE SECOND CLASS JOSEPH A. ASHLEY

Mr. President, I rise today to honor a fellow Ohioan and a brave seaman—Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Joseph Allen Ashley, from Manchester. Machinist's Mate Ashley died on January 9, 2005, when the nuclear submarine he was serving on—the USS *San Francisco*—collided with an undersea mountain. He was 24 years old. He is survived by his parents Vicki and Daniel Ashley, and two brothers Daniel Jr. and Benjamin.

Joey—as family and friends called him—attended Manchester High School where he was a percussionist in the marching band and a member of the Boy Scouts. Joey always had a huge smile on his face when he was on the field beating his drums. Those who knew him remember that beaming smile most and how he loved being in the spotlight.

"[Joey] liked to stand out in a crowd," said his brother Benjamin. "Dan and I are the quiet ones. Joseph would more likely do the talking for us both."

His brother Dan Jr. remembers that Joey thought of himself as a "good ol' Southern country boy," swaggering about in cowboy hat and boots. Joey even modeled the horn on his green jeep from his favorite T.V. show—The Dukes of Hazzard. When he honked, the song "Dixie" blared loudly enough to announce his presence all across town.

Everyone always knew when Joey was around. Once, when he was stationed overseas, his father Dan honked the horn to see if it still worked. Before Dan knew it, people were calling him to see if his son was home.

After high school, Joey attended Stark State College of Technology for a year and took welding classes. He passed both the welding certification exams and the Navy entrance test in 2001. His father Dan had served 8 years in the Navy, and his mother Vicki remembers how excited Joey was to follow in his dad's footsteps. When he signed up, he told her, "Mom I passed the Navy test; I'm going to do what

daddy did." According to his mom, Joey "always excelled in what he did."

Joey was planning a career in the Navy, the service he loved. He made his rank in minimal time, and his enthusiasm and ability earned him the Junior Sailor of the Year Award at the Guam Naval base. His crewmates noticed his obvious talent for repairing machinery and his affinity for The Dukes of Hazzard, and gave him the nickname "Cooter," after the show's mechanic.

Family was incredibly important to Joey. He frequently called home to check up on his parents and brothers and to let them know he was doing okay. He often swapped stories with his grandfather, who had also been stationed in the South Pacific during his time with the United States Army in WWII. During each phone call, Joey always made it a point to tell his family how much he loved them. That's simply the kind of person he was.

His faith was also important to Joey, and he found a church to attend wherever he was based. In Ohio, he was a member of both the Canal Fulton Baptist Church and the Akron Baptist Temple, and frequented other churches in the area, as well. And wherever he was, he had a smile for everyone he met.

Joey's mother describes her son with the following words:

When he had his heart set on something, he would try his best to get it done. I always told him to do what he wanted in life, but to be the best at it and to always try his hardest.

Joey did, indeed, achieve his best, and lived his life to the fullest. The day he died, his family lost a loving son and the Navy lost a brave sailor. He was an excellent submariner, and a valued member of what is a truly unique brotherhood. The moment Joey earned his dolphin pin—which symbolized his fitness to serve on a submarine—he joined an elite family of explorers and warriors—our Navy's submariners.

When I think about Joey and his service and dedication to our country, I am reminded of words that Sir Winston Churchill once said:

Of all the branches of men in the forces, there is none which shows more devotion and faces grimmer perils than the submariners.

Certainly, Joseph Ashley was the embodiment of those words. He was a brave sailor, devoted to his family, the Navy, and our Nation. He will never be forgotten. Family, friends, and fellow submariners from around the world have recognized his passing by leaving comments on his Internet tribute page. There are literally hundreds. The following words come from one of these tributes, written by a crewmate of Joey's on the USS *San Francisco*:

... I am completely honored to have served with such a great man, a loving person, a hardworking individual, and especially a friend. He has touched my soul, as well the rest of the crew, forever.

Joey's father said that his son died doing what he loved—serving his coun-

try. "This is what he wanted to do," he said.

Joey was buried next to his great-grandfather and namesake, who had also been a veteran. At the funeral, the Dixie horn on his green jeep played one last time for him.

Joey left a lasting impression on all who knew him. No one was a stranger to him. His crewmates will remember his "wicked Michael Jackson" impersonation—which one friend describes as "moonwalking in cowboy boots." Manchester High School has established a scholarship in his honor. And most important, his family will always remember his smile, his warmth, and his enthusiasm.

I conclude by sharing the words of Reverend Dallas R. Billington, who spoke at Joey's funeral. Here is what he said:

I want you to know what Joey has done for you. He gave his life so you can live in freedom.

Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Joseph Ashley served for us in foreign waters and patrolled our shores to keep us safe. We will remember him always.

My wife Fran and I will continue to keep Joey's family and friends in our thoughts and in our prayers.

SERGEANT DAVID R. CHRISTOFF, JR.

Mr. President, tonight I rise to pay tribute to a fallen hero who gave his life in service to this Nation—Marine Corps Sgt David Russell Christoff, Jr. from Rossford, OH. Sergeant Christoff was killed in Iraq on May 22, 2006, from wounds he received when a roadside bomb exploded while he was on foot patrol. He was 25 years old.

David Christoff was deeply devoted to our country. During his time in the Marines, he had toured the world with assignments in Australia, Thailand, Korea, Kuwait, and the Marshall Islands. At the time of his death, he was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq.

David had distinguished himself during his first deployment to Iraq, earning himself three commendation medals and the Purple Heart. One day, the young marine had been walking behind a truck full of troops when a roadside bomb went off. David's step-father, Jim, said that "he risked his life quite a bit to pull a number of people away."

David had also fought bravely through the Fallujah streets and was awarded a Purple Heart during his first tour for the shrapnel wounds he received during that battle. Despite these awards and honors, David never wavered in his desire to continue serving his country. He always felt that there was more he could do.

After returning to Ohio on leave in February 2005, David decided to leave his company—which was headed to Afghanistan—so that he could join one that was going to Iraq—and that was the Hawaii-based 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. David simply couldn't wait to return to the job he had been doing in the Middle East.

His mother Amy remembers that David believed he was making a positive difference. He felt a sense of duty to use his combat experience to train younger marines, as others had done for him. Amy said, "They were there to help train him, and he wanted to be there for the younger Marines, also."

A 1999 graduate of Shawnee High School—where he played golf and was a media center aid—David was a hero to those who knew him. The day after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, he left his job in construction and enlisted in the Marines. Like countless other brave individuals, he felt compelled to help our Nation. He died doing what his family said he loved—and that was defending his country.

David's faith in the Marines was as great as his faith in America. His grandmother Ann remembers this about David:

David was very smart and got good grades and worked his way up to sergeant very quickly in the Marines. He was always so sure that was what he was supposed to be and that was what he was supposed to be doing. He thought as long as the Marines were over there fighting we could all sleep good at home.

Bob Willman, a former Clark-Shawnee Superintendent, remembers David as a young man who was well-spoken, liked, and respected. It didn't surprise him that David joined the Marines. He said that "David was loyal to his family, to his classmates, to his school, and obviously, to his country."

When David enlisted, he made his intentions clear to his family. "After 9/11, he wanted to protect everyone," said his aunt Bethann. And his father David Sr. said that therefore "the only thing he could do was join the military. He does things all the way."

Students, friends, and family all have such fond memories of David growing up. He love playing golf and also liked all kinds of music—rap when he was younger and classic rock most recently. He had big plans for his future, hoping for a career in law enforcement. But, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, he knew that his career could wait. His country simply needed him more.

I would like to share David's own words, from a 2002 interview with *The Toledo Blade*. This is what he said:

I don't want my brother and sister to live in fear. I want to fight and defend the greatest country in the world.

David truly was a hero to his family. He was given leave to fly home in February 2005—and ended up saving his father's life by driving him to the hospital when David Sr. was suffering a heart attack. "He came home to save my life," his father said. "Just having him here [safe] and not in Iraq saved my life."

David was a hero to his fellow Marines, as well. Corporal J.J. Aguirre, a fellow marine and friend, remembers what the marines in David's squadron had to say about the young sergeant: "The guys would be like, 'Man, I'd fol-

low that guy anywhere. If he said lay down here and open a field of fire with no cover, I'd do it.'"

SGT Hector Zelaya remembers that he found a brother in David—not just a friend:

I've been through everything with him, from the beginning of boot camp to (school of infantry), from the Philippines and Korea and Thailand to Fallujah. He's my little brother. He was a true leader, and he had the confidence to stand alone.

Branden Skabla was David's best friend—they called themselves "brothers from different mothers," and David was the godfather to Branden's son. The boys had grown up together and decided to join the Marines on the very same day. It was a day Branden will never forget. They were working a construction job together when the news of the September 11 attacks reached them. The young men looked at each other, and simply knew that their country needed them.

Branden will never forget his friend. "It can't be real, but I know it is," he said. "I keep waiting for that phone call from him to tell me that he's coming home. I'll be waiting for that phone call for the rest of my life."

Branden was with David's father when David's belongings arrived. Included were two letters, one to each of David's parents. In the letters, he asked family and friends to pray for those still serving our country overseas.

David was buried with full military honors in Arlington Cemetery. There was also a service in his honor in Ohio. At that service, David's parents were each presented with a Purple Heart medal. David, who joined the Marine Corps in 2001, had been awarded eight medals during his time in the Marines.

David Christoff, Jr. was a young man with a sincere dedication to our country, a compassion for others, and a love of life and liberty. He deeply believed in America, in his fellow Marines, and in his family. He was motivated by a single desire—the wish to protect those he loved most.

My wife Fran and I will continue to keep David's father, David Sr., his mother and step-father Amy and Jim Hogan, his brother Michael, and his sister Lauren in our thoughts and in our prayers.

MASTER SERGEANT ROBERT H. WEST

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a fellow Ohioan—Army MSG Robert H. West from Elyria. Master Sergeant West was killed in Baghdad on May 14, 2006, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his armored vehicle. He was serving with the 1st Battalion, 312th Regiment, 4th Brigade, 78th Division, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He was 37 years old.

Master Sergeant West is survived by his wife Jeannie and their daughter Shelby, his mother Mary Heaton, and many loving aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Bobby—as he was known by family and friends—dedicated his life to train-

ing the young soldiers who would follow in his footsteps. When he was killed, he was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq and was helping train the new Iraqi police force. He had volunteered for the deployment because he felt his country needed him and because the military was a job he loved and wanted to do well. According to his aunt Bonnie, Bobby believed strongly that he had the experience and know-how needed to train Iraqi police officers. "He wasn't afraid," remembers Nora Hudson, another aunt of Bobby's. "He said, 'I'm a trained professional, it'll be all right.'"

Bobby graduated from Elyria Catholic High School in 1987, where he played on the legendary 1984 state championship football team. He was also involved in choir, baseball, and the ski club.

Lou Rotunda, Bobby's former basketball coach at Elyria Catholic, described him as "a quiet, great kid. He was just a fantastic person."

After graduating, Bobby enlisted in the Army in 1988. He was originally assigned to the armored cavalry. From there, he served for 6 years as drill instructor. Later, he transferred back to cavalry and served as a tank commander during his first deployment to Iraq in 2003 and 2004. A member of a Division experienced in training Army reservists, Bobby then returned to Iraq for a second deployment to help train the new Iraqi police force.

Bobby loved the camaraderie of Army life. Sergeant 1st Class Gerry Galloway, who was traveling with Bobby when the fatal attack occurred, had first met him several years ago at Fort Knox in Kentucky. In his words, Bobby was a "great NCO, great leader, good decision-maker, [and] good friend. I would follow him anywhere."

Joseph McFarlane, who served with Bobby, wrote the following about him in an email message posted to an Internet tribute Web site:

Thank you, Bobby, for being a great mentor, peer, and most of all, friend. It hurts me as I write this message and my prayers go out to your loved ones left behind. You have impacted so many young men in your service to this nation. A true Hero, I will miss you always.

When Bobby was killed, he was riding in a humvee, alongside 45-year-old CWO John W. Engeman, who was also killed in the attack. The two men were close and had been good friends ever since meeting 3 years prior. Both deployed voluntarily.

"They loved what they did, and they were good at it," said Bobby's wife Jeannie, speaking of the devotion both men felt for the Army and for their country—a devotion that was just in their blood. According to Donna, John Engeman's wife, "It's just what they did. They were just very quiet and very privately dedicated to what they did."

Fort Bragg's Main Post Chapel held a memorial service in memory of both Bobby and John. Over 200 mourners attended—most of them soldiers wearing

the lightning patch of the 78th Division on their uniforms.

Bobby enjoyed many things, including football, golf, hunting, and other sports. He had plans of someday possibly becoming a county sheriff's deputy. The most important thing in his life, though, was always his family. He loved spending time with his loved ones. He married Jeannie—the love of his life—in 1989. His mother Mary, in the words of his Aunt Bonnie, “was gold to him.” And to Bonnie, herself, and her children, Bobby was like a son and a brother. She said,

We had a special bond, and it grew stronger through the years. No matter how many times he was in and out, he always gave me a big bear hug and a kiss.

Bobby was close to his cousins, as well. John Shreve, Jr., wrote the following about his cousin:

Bobby brightened every life he touched. You were much more than a cousin to me. You will be greatly missed by all. You are my hero.

Bobby's family remembers him as a funny guy, whose off-hand comments and sunny disposition could brighten even the worst mood. “People were drawn to him, especially kids,” said his Aunt Tammi. “They wouldn't leave him alone!”

Those who knew Bobby describe him as someone who could make you laugh until you cried—until your cheeks hurt. He loved his family and he loved being a soldier. His colleagues will always remember his friendship, his experience, and his sense of humor. Bobby was a mentor to many soldiers and drill sergeants throughout his life and has influenced countless young men and women in their service to our Nation.

Because of his courage and leadership, Master Sergeant West was a true hero to all who knew him. He was a man who lived his life with great love for and commitment to his family and friends—a man who dedicated his life to protecting others. With his actions, Bobby truly made this world a better place.

My wife Fran and I will continue to keep the family of MSG Robert H. West in our thoughts and in our prayers.

SPECIALIST ANTHONY D. KINSLOW

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a fellow Ohioan—Army Specialist Anthony D. Kinslow, from Westerville, who died on June 13, 2005, when his military vehicle came under attack in Iraq. He was serving with the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Carson, Colorado. He was 21 years old.

Anthony was a young man liked and respected by all who knew him. He attended Big Walnut High School, where he was in Roy Merchant's mythology class. Roy remembers Anthony as a good student, always quiet and polite. And Anthony's friends and family describe him as gentle, bookish, and gentlemanly.

He was kind—someone who was always considerate of others. His was a

calming presence, some have said. According to his mother Kathleen, the only time she ever saw him intense was when he was writing.

A family friend remembers the type of good, hard-working person that Anthony was. As she put it, “he was a very kind, nice person. He worked through high school. Some of the nicest seem to be the ones who go.”

Anthony had strong ties in his community, where his grandfather had built the house where he lived. Neighbors say that some members of Anthony's family had lived there for at least 40 years.

Anthony graduated high school in 2002 and enlisted in the Army in May 2004. He was first stationed in South Korea, where he saw the rain and lightning of the monsoon season. He was then redeployed to Kuwait and then shortly afterward to Iraq.

Before being deployed to Iraq, Anthony had worked in the local Waffle House restaurant. It was here that he met his girlfriend Nichole. Although no date had been set, the two were planning on getting married when Anthony's deployment was finished. Heather Potts recalls that Anthony was always sending Nichole flowers while he was home—sometimes four times a week. She said, “Our living and dining room and kitchen were always filled with flowers.”

Heather wrote and sang a song entitled “Come Back to Me” for Anthony when he returned home on leave in January 2005. She said, “I was so scared he wouldn't come back.”

Anthony was very close to his family. He adored his brothers and sisters, while growing up, and cradled his nieces and nephews as an adult. As his mother said, “We all thought that when he passed away, how sad it was that he wouldn't have children.”

Anthony was completely devoted to his family and friends. Whenever they needed him, he was simply there for them. This same selfless devotion characterized his service in Iraq. One of his Army comrades wrote the following to Anthony on an Internet tribute website:

You were my friend and brother through thick and thin. You were always there for me when I needed a hand. We had many great times over the last year, regardless of the circumstances. I miss you much already, and I only wish you were here now.

Another soldier from Ohio died along with Anthony on June 13, 2005—and that was SGT Larry Kuhns from Austintown. Sergeant Kuhns' sister Sarah left the following message on that same Internet tribute Web site:

My brother Sergeant Larry Kuhns served with Anthony, and they both fell together. Ever since that day, I have felt lost and alone. I am truly sorry for your loss. My brother talked about Kinslow and thought he was a brave man. My heart goes out to all of you.

At Anthony's funeral, BG Albert Bryan described him as “first and foremost a soldier.” He went on to say:

Specialist Kinslow, in choosing to be a soldier, chose a life of service over personal ful-

fillment . . . to provide for the greater community rather than to seek out those things that lead to personal gain.

At the same service, the Reverend James Walter called Anthony a “peacemaker.”

Anthony's mother remembers her son's bravery when he departed for Iraq. She wrote Anthony a letter after his death, which was read by a friend during his funeral. Her words describe Anthony as stoically turning to board the plane that would take him back to the battlefields. She wrote, “I marveled at your immense strength and bravery.”

Anthony will be remembered and deeply missed by all who knew him. He was a kind, loving man who served his country selflessly. In the end, however, the best words to honor him belong to his mother. She said this about her beloved son:

You were one of the brightest lights of my life, and I know you will shine down on us from heaven. I will always love you, tons, bushels, and spoonfuls.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep Army SPC Anthony D. Kinslow's family—his mother Kathleen, his father and step-mother A. Scott and Julia Kinslow, his sisters Emily, Mary, and Lucie Kinslow; his brothers Peter Kinslow and PFC Owen Kinslow, and his step-sister Kelli Vanover—in our thoughts and in our prayers.

LANCE CORPORAL EDWARD AUGUST “AUGIE” SCHROEDER II

Mr. President, I rise today to honor a fellow Ohioan—Marine LCpl Edward Schroeder II, who died on August 3, 2005, when a roadside bomb exploded by his vehicle in Iraq. He was 23 years old.

The son of Paul Schroeder and Rosemary Palmer and the brother of Amanda Schroeder, Lance Corporal Schroeder's middle name was August, and to family and friends he was known simply as “Augie.” Born in Columbus, he and his family lived in China during his pre-school years before moving to New Jersey, where he graduated from Columbia High School in 2000.

Augie's father remembers his son as a young man of great promise, with an “easy charm and readiness to help.” Indeed, Augie was the type of person whom we can all admire. At Columbia High, he was a member of the swim team and lacrosse team. During his free time, he would go door-to-door collecting food for needy families and was a member of a church outreach program that painted run-down homes, built wheelchair ramps, and repaired roofs. He also passed the qualifications test to become an emergency medical technician and served on two emergency squads. A friend from his church outreach program remembers that Augie was simply the kind of person everyone should strive to be.

Augie's mother Rosemary recalls that “he just liked to help people.” And sister says that Augie “was a hero before he died—not just because he went to Iraq. I was proud of him before.”

After graduating from high school, Augie followed family tradition and enrolled at The Ohio State University, while his family moved to Cleveland. Augie studied criminal justice at OSU and was a member of the Phi Kappa Theta fraternity. His fraternity brothers remember that he loved to hang out in the fraternity house, sipping beers and talking about Buckeyes football.

Augie began thinking of joining the Marines after the terrorist attacks of September 11. He enlisted in 2002. Augie wanted to serve his country and felt that the Marines was simply the best way for him to do that.

Mr. President, Augie is remembered most of all for his wonderful sense of humor. His mother describes him as a boy of contrasts—he could be somber, but he also had a good sense of fun. Friends and family still laugh over his many jokes and pranks.

For example, Augie's pre-school once held an event where the kids were told to dress in a manner highlighting their heritage. Augie showed up wearing a pair of lederhosen. He pulled them way up and told everyone that he was the German cousin of the famous television character Steve Urkel and then did a perfect imitation.

Augie kept his sense of humor throughout school. Once, during a middle school talent show, he performed as an inept magician, who, along with his dummy partner, fumbled all his tricks.

And, Augie never lacked ideas for humorous Halloween costumes. He showed up at one Halloween party dressed as Tonya Harding, wearing a figure-skating outfit and carrying a lead pipe. Another legendary costume involved four fingers, a thumb, and a T-shirt lettered "L.A. Evidence Room" and "one size fits all." He was the infamous bloody glove from the O.J. Simpson case.

Augie's mother said that she always thought that he would eventually become either a police officer or a stand-up comic—she just didn't know which.

Rosemary also remembers that being part of a team was incredibly important to Augie. Whether growing up in China—where collaborative work is stressed—or playing on his many sports teams in New Jersey, Augie was always someone who believed in working with others toward a greater goal. He loved to participate on the football, soccer, baseball, lacrosse, and swimming teams. He was simply a person who believed in placing teamwork before individual gain. "Some people are just on that wavelength and that was Augie," his mother said.

Augie's belief in the importance of teamwork is reflected in the work he did while growing up and as a young man. At different times, he worked as an emergency medical technician, a lifeguard, a Boy Scout, a church youth counselor at Camp Glen Gray, and a marine. Along the way, he made a positive impact on every life he touched.

Augie was a young man of great maturity and compassion. Maralynn

Fahey, a church youth group leader, describes him as a "selfless" teenager. She particularly remembers his help during food collections. She said, "Dropping 500 bags in the neighborhood was a real effort, and that was something Augie was willing to do."

An anonymous author once wrote, "How lucky I am to have known someone who was so hard to say goodbye to." No better words reflect the sentiments of those who knew and loved Augie Schroeder. His desire and willingness to help others—even those he didn't know—endeared him to all. He was simply a great friend and model citizen.

Augie's fraternity brother Brian Cox said the following at his friend's funeral:

With Augie, there were no enemies—only friends. He was put on Earth for a reason. Augie was, is, and always will be my hero. [. . .] There are very few people of whom you can truly say [they] never let you down—whom you can call a best friend.

During his funeral, Reverend Charles Yoost also remembered the many lives Augie had touched. He said that "it doesn't seem possible to believe that Augie is gone. His brief life made some of us more thoughtful people."

His mother remembers that Augie was always asking what was out there. He wanted to experience everything he could. His approach to life was simple—"Let me try."

Augie was a man who lived life to its fullest. He was a devoted friend, son, brother, and soldier. His sense of humor brightened others' days and his generosity and strength of spirit were an inspiration to all who knew him.

Augie's family and friends will never forget the young man who brought so much joy to their lives. He was an individual who understood the importance of honor and integrity, who believed in loving and respecting his family, and who knew the importance of serving one's community.

I am honored to speak about him today.

My wife Fran and I will continue to keep the family of Augie Schroeder in our thoughts and prayers.

SERGEANT BENJAMIN J. LAYMON

Mr. President, I rise today to remember a fallen soldier, who gave his life while serving our Nation in Iraq—Army Sgt Benjamin J. Laymon, from Mount Vernon, OH. On June 24, 2006, Sergeant Laymon died during foot patrol when a roadside bomb exploded. He was 22 years old.

Ben, as family and friends called him, was a good-natured jokester, who loved to pull pranks and make others laugh. Those who knew him best described him as the light in the room, and his family called him "Gentle Ben" because of his deeply caring nature. "He was so sweet and considerate," remembers his mother Gale. And according to his step-father David, Ben "was the type of kid who would call if he was going to be late because he didn't want you to worry."

As a boy, Ben would often visit a 72-acre farm belonging to his aunt and uncle Shirley and Richard Laymon. He was always a welcome visitor. Shirley said that "Ben was one of the sweetest, most thoughtful persons you'd ever want to know. He was so sweet, cared about everybody, and cared about his country."

Ben attended Mount Vernon High School, where he proudly wore No. 73 on the football field for the Yellow Jackets. His former football coach, Scott Spitler, wasn't surprised at all when he learned that Ben had decided to enlist in the Army. "He was just a very hard worker and very caring," Scott said. "Ben was the type of kid who was willing to do anything, that he could to help his teammates, to better himself, and to better his team."

Ben's former teammate, Chad Biddle, remembers the positive impression Ben always made. "He was the type of guy everyone got along with," Chad said. "He was always the center of attention, even when he wasn't trying to be. He was just an all-around, down-to-earth good guy."

Ben's close friend, Jessica Frazee, also recalls his great sense of humor and his compassion for others:

Ben was the class clown. He liked to laugh. He was the kind of friend who could make all of your troubles go away. He always put people in front of himself, always listening to what everyone else had to say. He is everybody's hero. He just wanted you to be happy.

Ben's sense of humor truly was legendary at Mount Vernon High School. He would often dress up in funny costumes to attend basketball games, and once even convinced his friend Joey Armstrong to go with him dressed as hunters in bright orange hats with ear flaps. "He was always making everyone laugh," Joey remembers. "He was hysterical. . . . He was my best friend—the best friend anyone could ever have."

Ben's childhood dream was to become a soldier. He simply knew what he wanted to do. As his brother Andy said during his funeral, "Few people at Ben's age knew what they wanted to do with their lives. But Ben did. He had goals and plans. He gave the Army 110 percent, and for that, I am so proud of you Ben."

Ben enlisted in the Army in September 2002 and began serving his first tour of duty in Iraq in 2003. His second tour began in November 2005. Family friend, Dick Shafer, remembers how excited Ben was about what he was doing—about how he believed in what he was doing and would write often of the good he saw happening in Iraq.

And, Ben's family remembers that he liked being in Iraq because of the challenges and the freedom to do his job. After his tour finished, he was hoping to become a SWAT officer in the Columbus police department.

Ben was dedicated not only to serving his country, but also to the family he loved so very much. His sense of

humor and love of laughter made him most popular with his six young nieces and nephews. His mother Gale particularly remembers the love Ben had for kids. She said: I always thought he would be a great teacher for younger children.

Even while in Iraq, Ben wanted to keep his family happy. When calling or emailing, he was always more concerned about them than himself. His mother remembers the very words he always said—"Don't worry, I'll be fine."

Those who knew Ben remembered his rich life during his funeral at the First Christian Church. Reverend Jamie Gump said that Ben lived a full life but died too soon for those who loved him. Reverend Gump also read a letter from Ben's mother, in which she wrote: I miss you so much and long to see your face.

At the service, MG David Huntoon presented Ben's parents with their son's Purple Heart and Bronze Star, and said:

Sergeant Laymon was part of the 10th Cavalry, a proud outfit that has seen many heroes. His mission required courage and compassion. It was clear to the United States Army that he was an outstanding leader.

Ben's death has been a loss to his entire community. His friends and neighbors will never forget him. Kathy Blair knew both Ben and his family. "I'm feeling great sadness, unbelievable sadness," she said. Beth Totman also knew Ben. "He was a super-nice guy, so kind and fun to be around," she said. "He always seemed to have a smile on his face."

Ben brought joy and laughter to all who knew him. I would like to conclude with the words of one of Ben's fellow soldiers, a young man named Pete, who was with Ben when the roadside bomb exploded. This is what Pete said:

I'm going to miss him so much. He was a great friend. He could make me laugh at the worst possible times in my life. Even now, I look back on the stuff he did and laugh.

Ben will always be remembered. His compassion and positive attitude were truly rare, and he simply brightened the lives of all who knew him. My wife Fran and I will continue to keep Ben's father and step-mother James and Kathy Laymon his mother and step-father Gale and David Harstine, and his brothers Trevor, Curt, and Andrew in our thoughts and in our prayers.

I yield the floor.

CORPORAL NICHOLAS A. ARVANITIS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to pay special tribute to U.S. Army CPL Nicholas A. Arvanitis of Salem, NH. On October 6, 2006, this brave 22-year old paratrooper gave his life for his Nation while engaged in combat operations with enemy forces near Bayji, Iraq. Corporal Arvanitis had been stationed in Iraq since August 2006, serving as a squadron leader assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Ft. Bragg, NC.

Nicholas, or "Nick" to family and friends, grew up in Salem, NH, and was

a 2003 graduate of Salem High School. He was a member of the wrestling team and played guitar in the jazz band and sousaphone in the marching band. Friends remember him as a team player, who got along with everyone and was always smiling.

Nick joined the U.S. Army in August 2003 because he wanted to protect his country and his family. Friends and family said he loved his country, wanted to defend it, and sensed a call to duty. He completed Infantry One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, GA, in December 2003 and the Basic Airborne Course in January 2004. He reported to Fort Bragg, NC, in March 2004 and was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division in April 2004. Corporal Arvanitis deployed to Afghanistan in the fall of 2004 in support of the Afghan elections and deployed to Iraq in July 2006 as a member of 3rd Brigade Combat Team in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Corporal Arvanitis' awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Combat Infantryman Badge, Parachutist's Badge, and Expert Weapons Qualification Badge.

Patriots from the State of New Hampshire have served our Nation with honor and distinction from Bunker Hill to Bayji—and U.S. Army CPL Nicholas Arvanitis served and fought in that same fine tradition.

My sympathy, condolences, and prayers go out to Nick's maternal grandparents Leonard and Rita, his parents Maureen and Richard, his sister Kimberly, and to his other family members and many friends who have suffered this most grievous loss. All will sorely miss Nicholas Arvanitis, the forgiving young man with a heart of gold, the patriot who always thought of his family and friends, the courageous and outstanding paratrooper who served our Nation with distinction and honor. In the words of Daniel Webster, may his remembrance be as long lasting as the land he honored. God bless Nicholas A. Arvanitis.

LANCE CORPORAL MICHAEL SCHOLL

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President I rise to express my sympathy over the loss of U.S. Marine LCpl Michael Scholl of Nebraska. Lance Corporal Scholl died from wounds suffered in combat operations in Iraq's Al Anbar Province.

Lance Corporal Scholl was from Lincoln, NE. A 2002 graduate of Lincoln High School, he was originally denied enlistment with the Marines. But with persistence, Lance Corporal Scholl received a medical waiver and became a marine in 2003.

While stationed in Hawaii, Lance Corporal Scholl met his future wife Melissa. The couple were married a day before he was deployed to Afghanistan.

He served in Afghanistan from summer 2005 to January 2006. Within a month of his return, he and Melissa were expecting a baby. On October 11, 2006, only a few weeks after Lance Corporal Scholl was deployed to Iraq, Melissa gave birth to Addison Rose Scholl. Although he never met his daughter, Lance Corporal Scholl was a proud father. He received pictures of her while he was in Iraq and also recorded stories for her to hear as she grew. Thousands of brave men and women like Lance Corporal Scholl are serving in Iraq.

In addition to his wife and daughter, Lance Corporal Scholl is survived by his father Steven Scholl of Friend, NE, and his mother Debora Chandler of Lincoln, NE.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring LCpl Michael Scholl.

HONORING SENIOR MASTER SERGEANT MICHAEL L. LEMKE

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I would like to recognize airman SMSgt Michael L. Lemke, stationed at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, WY. Senior Master Sergeant Lemke was selected as one of the Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airmen for 2006. The award is based on his superior leadership, job performance, and personal achievements.

The Air Force honors the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year at the annual Air Force Association's Air and Space Conference and Technology Exposition in September. Over 352,000 Active-Duty airmen were considered for this award. I am pleased they recognized Senior Master Sergeant Lemke with this well deserved honor. I had the pleasure of meeting with Senior Master Sergeant Lemke while he was in Washington to receive his award.

Senior Master Sergeant Lemke has been in the Air Force for 19 years and is the superintendent of the 90th Contracting Squadron at F.E. Warren AFB. He was also selected as the top graduate at the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy out of 2,515 Senior NCOs who graduated in 2005. He recently returned from deployment in Iraq and I thank him for his sacrifice and service. Senior Master Sergeant Lemke is preparing to retire from the Air Force.

I have always said that anyone wanting to live in Wyoming will do so if they can create a job. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and also a member of the Small Business Committee, I am pleased that Senior Master Sergeant Lemke will be entering the private sector as a small business owner in Cheyenne. He and his wife Maria, who is an accountant, will be partners in Front Range Nuclear Medicine. One of the biggest problems in rural America is access to health care facilities. Front Range Nuclear Medicine helps improve access to health care for people in Wyoming by transporting medical scanning technology