



Philip Studer

Objects for Deployment

Philip Studer

Objects for Deployment

veteransbookproject.com



FINAL DAYS IN PARADISE



I WANT TO BELIEVE
THE X-FILES



Jul 25, 2008



In July 2008 when my brother Brian was on leave from his deployment in Afghanistan, our whole family decided to come together in Hawaii for a real family vacation. We hadn't really done anything like that since going to Disney World in the 1990s.

My mom, two sisters and Brian all flew to Honolulu, HI, where I had been living and working for the previous year. I'm an interior designer and took the opportunity to move there to work on large condominium and hotel projects. Working there gave me the opportunity to travel to Tokyo, Japan, for business and to work on numerous other projects in the Pacific Rim.





My mother Ellen and my sisters, Chellee and Crystal, could only stay a week, so we hit every major tourist trap on Oahu. Having lived there for about a year already, I knew all the sites and beaches to check out and the ones to avoid.

Brian was squinting and leaning away from the extreme winds found at the Pali Highway Lookout near the top of the pass. It was freezing up there. Fifteen minutes later we would be in 80-degree weather along the coast on the windward side of the island.



I took the whole family to one of my favorite places on Oahu, Lanikai Beach in the small community of Kailua. The beaches there are sugar sand and there are no tourist crowds to fight. It's a hidden little gem of beach known only to people in the know (like me).

Everyone always tells people traveling to Hawaii that you must go to a luau. Of course, people who have lived there awhile roll their eyes. They know it's something you have to do, but you never need to go again. So even though I had done my time at a luau before, I grudgingly went along, and everyone had a good time.

We have the cheesy tourist photo to prove it.









We also went to Maunawili Falls, a beautiful hidden waterfall that requires a long, hot and steamy hike through the wet jungle. Brian, Crystal, Chellee and I made it all the way and spent a few minutes taking pictures and wading in the ice-cold water.

Mother was tired out and waited for us along the trail.

Later in the week we did the submarine tour in Waikiki and got the equally cheesy picture to prove it.



We were touring the volcano on the Big Island. We toured through the black lava fields by car and flew over the smoldering hole on the upper slopes by helicopter to see the red hot lava flowing from the earth. The pilot circled around and flew past huge clouds of steam created as the lava reached the ocean, causing it to boil instantly.

Brian was walking along the dried lava crust, and while insignificant at the time, this image later became a fitting symbol of things to come.



We didn't know this was the last time we would have the family all together...

After that, my mom and sisters returned to the mainland. Brian stayed with me in Honolulu for an extra week to use up his remaining leave.

The last night before Brian left, we went to a local restaurant and talked about what he wanted to do after he got out of the military. He was looking forward to getting out in a few months. His unit had two to three months left in Afghanistan, followed by about two months in Germany, and then he would be done for good.

He talked about working for HALO Trust, which is a non-governmental organization that gets rid of land mines in former war zones. He also talked about buying a place in northern Minnesota. He wanted to buy some land, build a house, and just get away from it all. We didn't really talk much about his time in Afghanistan. He was very quiet about what he experienced. I learned more about that later after meeting his buddies who served with him there.

A NOTIFICATION

On the afternoon of August 22, 2008, two soldiers, one of them a chaplain, knocked on Mother's door. I imagine it happened much like you see in the movies: "We regret to inform you that your son was killed in action in Ghazni, Afghanistan."

I was at work at the time because of the four-hour time difference in Honolulu. Brian had left Hawaii only a couple of weeks earlier.

I remember that later I heard that Mother had said to the chaplain, "What a waste."

She didn't cry, from what I was told. She was stunned and in shock.

The military representatives set up a time to return in a day or two to start the funeral process.

Within minutes the media showed up at her house to get a statement. They had been informed via a Pentagon press release.

She called me just as the soldiers were leaving. I left work immediately and went home. At first I thought about driving to a friend's house, but I found out she was out of town, so I went home to my house, an empty house, with my roommates also gone. It was Friday, and it seemed like everyone was out of town.

I spent Saturday and Sunday alone. It was hard. I was 5000 miles away from my family in the middle of the Pacific, connected to them only by phone.

I arranged a flight home and began the process of dealing with the funeral preparations and the media circus. The Republican National Convention just happened to be going on in St. Paul at the time, which made things even more interesting. We were alerted to prepare for the possibility of protestors or news cameras or just plain crazies showing up at the funeral. We carefully orchestrated a media blackout, and security precautions were put in place for the unexpected.

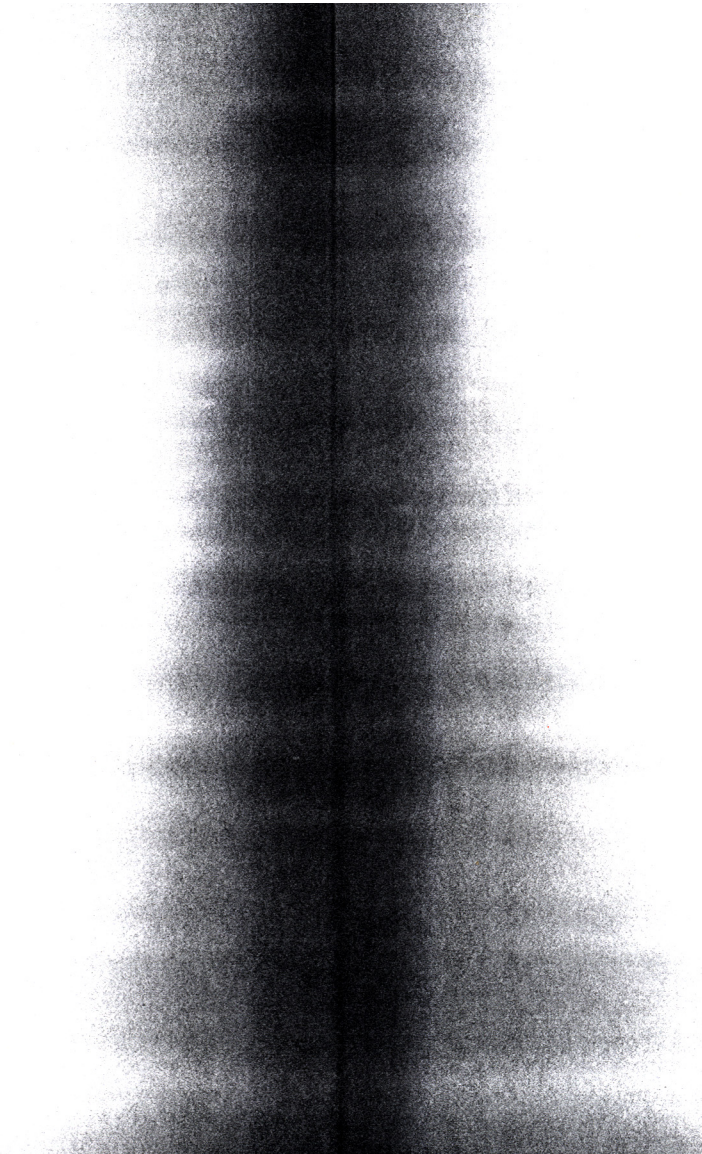
Brian's body arrived by jet from Afghanistan via Germany via Dover, Delaware to Minneapolis. The hardest part was when they opened the cargo door and lowered the casket to soldiers waiting below. It was the first thing we saw of him since being notified the week before. At that moment it all became real and no longer just a story or report on the news. He was really gone.

We met SFC Jay Wilson, who had escorted the body from Dover. We later found out he was Brian's boss and was on leave himself when he got the news. He had his orders changed to be there for us and to be Brian's official escort throughout the funeral proceedings.

I spent much of my time planning the funeral services. Once, while in a meeting with the chaplain and the funeral director, I asked if I could see Brian's remains. Mother had no desire to, but I felt I needed that moment to look for real. SFC Wilson, who had actually seen the body, convinced me not to. He said, "Remember your brother the way you saw him in Hawaii; you don't want to remember him the way he is now."

We had a closed casket at the funeral.

WCCO.com
by The Associated Press



A soldier from Minnesota has been killed while trying to disarm an explosive device in Afghanistan.

The Department of Defense says 28-year-old Staff Sgt. Brian E. Studer of Ramsey died August 22 in Ghazni, Afghanistan.

He was assigned to the 720th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 28th Transportation Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade out of Mannheim, Germany.

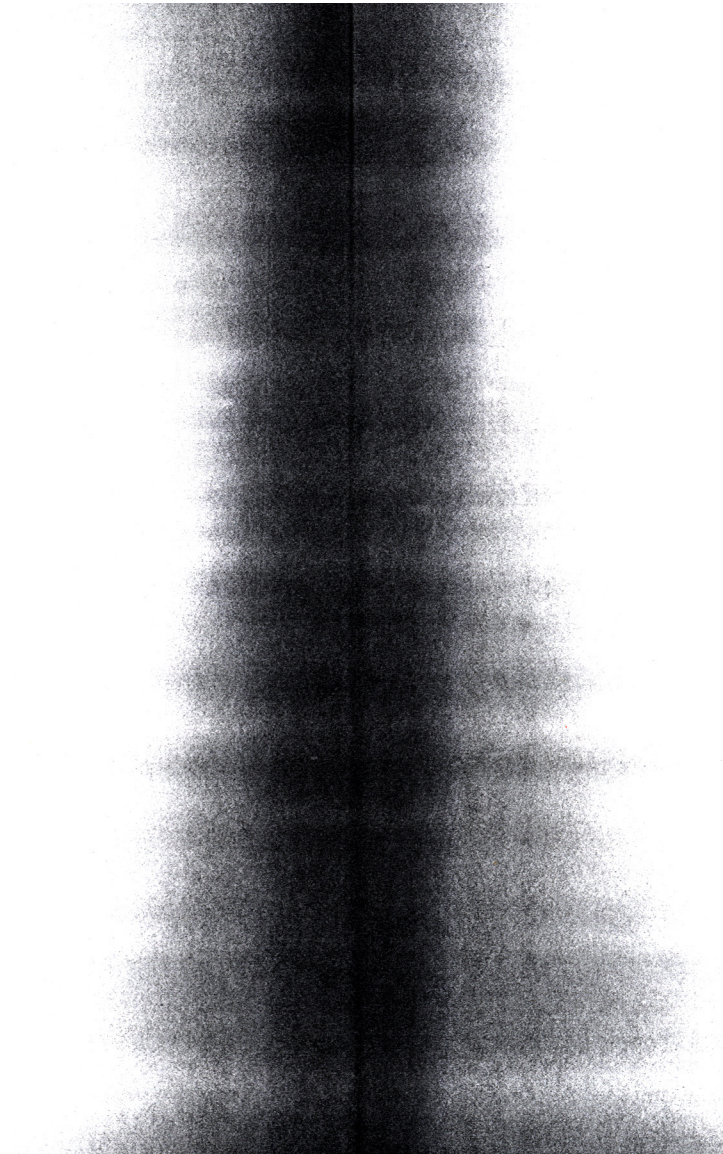
He's the 74th person with strong Minnesota ties to have died in connection with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His mother, Ellen, of Ramsey, tells the Star Tribune her son had been in the Army for nine years and was scheduled to leave the service early next year.

After she gave that interview, Studer's family said through the military that they did not wish to speak with the media.

- August 26, 2008

KARE11.com
by Trisha Volpe



Minnesota soldier killed in Afghanistan

A soldier from Minnesota has been killed while trying to disarm an explosive device in Afghanistan. The Department of Defense says 28-year-old Staff Sgt. Brian E. Studer of Ramsey died August 22 in Ghazni, Afghanistan. He was assigned to the 720th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 28th Transportation Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade out of Mannheim, Germany. He's the 74th person with strong Minnesota ties to have died in connection with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Studer graduated from Elk River High School in 1999.

-August 26, 2008

(comments by online readers to story)

sammysam23 wrote:

I am PFC Clore in the 70th EN BN. I had the honor to serve with SSgt Studer in Afghanistan. When I heard on Sat. what had happened my heart sank. It is always hard hearing about people you know dieing for this country. My prayers and condolences go out to his family. I would also like to say that he served this country and the people with great distinction, honor and true respect. I will never forget Staff Sgt Studer. All gave some, some gave all!
8/26/2008 11:21 AM CDT on kare11.com

Bratz wrote:

Thank you to Brian for serving your country and protecting us all!!! Thank you to Brian's family for supporting him in his venture. My heart goes out to all of Brian's family and friends, may time heal the wounds and please know that there are many out here holding you up in prayer!
8/26/2008 11:14 AM CDT on kare11.com

sweet_honey wrote:

Couldn't have been said any better, esorgatz!
8/26/2008 11:11 AM CDT on kare11.com

WBLGIRL wrote:

God bless this man, and his family. Thank you for serving our country and protecting us from harm. You truly are a HERO. THANK YOU!
8/26/2008 10:59 AM CDT on kare11.com

esorgatz wrote:

My thoughts and prayers are with his family. I have a brother over in Afghanistan right now, it is hard to imagine what I would do if I lost him! WE MUST ALL STAND BY OUR TROOPS AND SHOW OUR SUPPORT EVEN IF YOU DON'T SUPPORT THE WAR!!!
8/26/2008 10:53 AM CDT on kare11.com

JessK wrote:

Thank you Brian for giving your life for me and my family, and everyone else here. Thank you to Brian's family, for supporting him in what he did, and helping him have the strength and integrity he needed to do what he did. God bless you all!
8/27/2008 10:45 AM CDT on kare11.com

soldierswife84 wrote:

To Brians family my thoughts and our prayers are with you.

8/27/2008 10:15 AM CDT on kare11.com

MyOwnOpinion3 wrote:

To the family and friends of SSG Studer: You have my deepest sympathy and prayers.

Thank you for supporting him in his decision to serve our country. He is a true HERO! Be Proud of him for what doing what so many others wouldn't do. God's Blessings to you.

To the Soldiers and comrades of SSG Studer: Thank you for serving our country you are all HEROES! I know you didn't necessarily want to be where you are, but you were called and you went. God Bless you and your families!

8/27/2008 1:19 AM CDT on kare11.com

Beanner59 wrote:

God bless you Brian. Thank you for giving your life for something you truly believed in. You and other men & women like you have made our country a safer place to live. I'm truly sorry that your family had to lose you at such a young age. What a sacrifice on your part as well as your families. You won't ever be forgotten.

8/26/2008 10:40 PM CDT on kare11.com

cbliss66 wrote:

God bless this man, and his family...to the rest of the guys...kick some butt and get home soon!

8/26/2008 3:50 PM CDT on kare11.com

seester2 wrote:

My thoughts and prayers to Brian, and all of the service people in Iraq.

8/26/2008 8:36 PM CDT on kare11.com

mj1978 wrote:

He gave his life unselfishly for a government that selfishly put its people in harms way

8/26/2008 2:37 PM CDT on kare11.com

fancy22 wrote:

Thank You Brian for protecting us! My prayers are with your family.

8/26/2008 11:41 AM CDT on kare11.com

MnWildFan15 wrote:

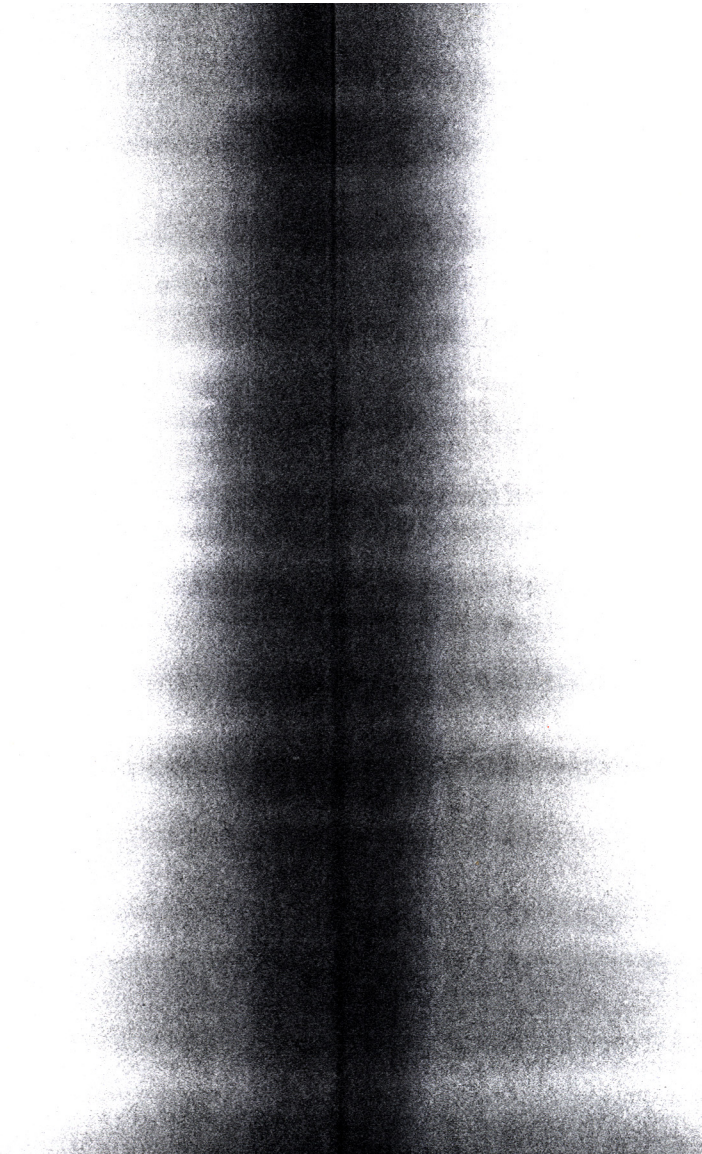
My thoughts and prayers are with him and his family. God Bless our troops and may they all come home safe.

8/26/2008 11:22 AM CDT on kare11.com

MyFOXtwincities.com - August 26, 2008

Ramsey, Minn. Soldier Killed in Afghanistan

Staff Sgt. Brian Studer was scheduled to leave military in 2009



MINNEAPOLIS -- A soldier from Ramsey, Minnesota has been killed while trying to deactivate an explosive device in Afghanistan. Staff Sgt. Brian Studer, 28, died August 22. He's the 74th person with strong Minnesota ties to have died in connection with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Studer was killed when an improvised explosive device he was attempting to deactivate exploded in Ghazni, Afghanistan. His mother, Ellen, told the Star Tribune her son had been in the Army for nine years and was scheduled to leave the service early next year.

Studer was assigned to the 720th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 28th Transportation Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade in Mannheim, Germany.

StarTribune.com - August 26, 2008
by MARY LYNN SMITH and PAUL WALSH, Star
Tribune staff writers

Slain Ramsey soldier 'was so close' to Finishing Service

Brian Studer, 28, of Ramsey died last week in Afghanistan while trying to disarm a bomb. He had two months left to serve. Staff Sgt. Brian Studer was mere months away from leaving Afghanistan and the Army, with plans to return to Minnesota. But Studer, 28, of Ramsey was killed Friday trying to disarm an explosive device in Ghazni Province. Studer, who had been in the Army nine years, expected to leave Afghanistan in two months and finish his last couple of months of service in Germany, said his brother, Philip Studer.

He served with an explosive ordnance disposal company based in Germany, the Army said. "It was so close," Philip Studer said. "He was almost done. He was ready to get out." Brian Studer grew up in Ramsey and graduated from Elk River High School in 1999, his brother said. "He was a good kid. Quiet. Smart. Kept to himself."

He took college classes his last two years of high school, Philip Studer said. After graduating from high school, he had the opportunity to go to college. "But he chose to go into the Army," Philip Studer said. "He wanted to see the world and do some good." The Army transformed the kid who used to stay in his room all day and work on his computer, his brother said. "He stood straighter. He was more assertive. He was more talkative," Philip Studer said. While in the Army, he was assigned to Germany, South Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Philip Studer said his brother planned to use his military experience by joining HALO Trust, a nonpolitical, nongovernmental organization that specializes in removal of war debris, including mines. "He wanted to use his experience in a nonmilitary way," Studer said. "He downplayed the danger and always reassured us."

Brian Studer's death brings to at least 74 the number of people with strong Minnesota ties who have died in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Studer is the fifth with Minnesota connections killed in Afghanistan.

KSTP.com - Eyewitness News

List of Minnesota soldiers killed in action:

1. Army Pfc. Edward J. Herrgott, 20, of Shakopee, killed July 3, 2003, when a sniper shot him in the neck outside the national museum in Baghdad.
2. Army Sgt. Brian R. Hellermann, 35, formerly of Freeport, killed Aug. 6, 2003, in an ambush in Baghdad.
3. Army Staff Sgt. Dale A. Panchot, 26, of Northome, killed Nov. 17, 2003, in an ambush on his patrol near Balad.
4. Army Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Dorff, 32, of Minneapolis, died Jan. 25, 2004, when his helicopter crashed in the Tigris River while on a rescue mission.
5. Marine Pfc. Matthew G. Milczark, 18, of Kettle River, found dead in Kuwaiti chapel March 7, 2004. Military investigators said he shot himself.

6. Marine Cpl. Tyler R. Fey, 22, of Eden Prairie, killed in fighting April 4, 2004, in Al Anbar Province.

7. Marine Pfc. Moises Langhorst, 19, of Moose Lake, killed in hostile fire April 5, 2004, in Al Anbar Province.

8. Marine Lance Cpl. Levi Angell, 20, of Cloquet, killed April 8, 2004, in a rocket-propelled grenade attack in Al Anbar Province.

9. North Dakota National Guard Spc. James Holmes, 28, of East Grand Forks, Minn., died May 8, 2004, of wounds suffered May 3 when a roadside bomb exploded while he was on vehicle patrol in Iraq.

10. Army Cpl. Demetrius Lamont Rice, 24, of Ortonville, died July 14, 2004, in a vehicle rollover near Talafar, 45 miles from Mosul in northern Iraq.

11. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class David A. Cedergren, 25, of South St. Paul, collapsed in non-combat incident Sept. 11, 2004, near Iska-ndariayah, Iraq. Death ruled natural

12. John Pinsonneault, 39, of North Branch, civilian contractor for Iraq security firm when killed by bomb Oct. 14, 2004, in Baghdad.

13. Army Spc. Daniel McConnell, 26, of Duluth, killed Nov. 16, 2004, in vehicle rollover in Kirkuk.

14. Army Spc. Dwayne James McFarlane Jr., 20, of Cass Lake, died Jan. 9, 2005, from bomb attack while on patrol in Baghdad.

15. Army Sgt. Mike Carlson, 22, of St. Paul, died Jan. 24, 2005, in Mohammed Sacran, Iraq, with four others when their Bradley fighting vehicle overturned.

16. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mickey E. Zaun, 27, of Brooklyn Park, died Jan. 28, 2005, in Mosul, Iraq of injuries after two armored vehicles collided.

17. National Guard 1st Lt. Jason Timmerman, 24, of Tracy, died Feb. 21, 2005, when roadside bomb went off in Baghdad.

18. National Guard Staff Sgt. David Day, 25, of St. Louis Park, died Feb. 21, 2005, when roadside bomb went off in Baghdad.

19. Sgt. Jesse Lhotka, 24, of Alexandria, Army National Guard, died Feb. 21, 2005, when roadside bomb went off in Baghdad.

20. Army Spc. Travis Bruce, 22, of Rochester, died March 23, 2005, in Baghdad when struck by a rocket-propelled grenade as he stood on the roof of a building his unit was guarding.

21. Marine Capt. Kelly C. Hinz, 30, of Woodbury, died May 2, 2005, when the F/A-18 Hornet jet he was piloting crashed with another jet fighter in south-central Iraq.

22. Army Chief Warrant Officer Matthew Lourey, 40, a Kerrick native, died May 26, 2005, when the Kiowa Warrior helicopter he was flying was shot down in Iraq.

23. Army 1st Lt. Michael Fasnacht, 25, of Mankato, died June 8, 2005, when a roadside bomb hit the Bradley fighting vehicle he was driving while on patrol in Iraq.

24. Army Chief Warrant Officer Corey Goodnature, 35, a native of Clarks Grove, died June 28, 2005, when the helicopter he was piloting was shot down by a missile in Afghanistan.

25. Marine Sgt. Bryan James Opskar, 32, of Moorhead, died July 23, 2005, in Iraq when a roadside bomb exploded near Ar Rutbah, Iraq.

26. Army Sgt. Mike Benson, 40, of Winona, died Aug. 10 of injuries suffered Aug. 2 while riding in a convoy that was struck by a bomb in Baghdad.

27. Army Pfc. Elden D. Arcand, 22, of White Bear Lake, died Aug. 21, 2005, when their tractor rolled over in Mosul, Iraq, while pulling a tanker.

28. Army Spc. Jacob T. Vanderbosch, 21, of Vadnais Heights, died Oct. 3 along with soldiers from Ohio and Florida in Al Haqlaniyah, Iraq, when a bomb detonated near their vehicle.

29. Marine Master Sgt. Brett E. Angus, 40, of St. Paul, killed Nov. 26, 2005, while conducting combat operations near Camp Taqaddum, Iraq. His vehicle apparently struck a roadside bomb.

30. Marine Lance Cpl. Scott Modeen, 24, of New Hope, killed Dec. 1, 2005, when buried artillery shells were detonated outside an abandoned flour mill the Marines had been using as a temporary patrol base in Fallujah.

31. Marine Cpl. Anthony McElveen, 21, of Little Falls, a 2003 graduate of Little Falls High School, one of 10 Marines killed Dec. 1, 2005, when buried artillery shells were detonated outside an abandoned flour mill the Marines had been using as a temporary patrol base in Fallujah.

32. Marine Staff Sgt. Kenneth B. Pospisil, 35, of Andover, died Dec. 14, 2005, when a bomb he was going to disarm went off near Ar Ramadi.

33. Kyle Kaszynski, 39, of rural Elmwood, Wis., died Dec. 22, 2005, when a roadside bomb in Iraq killed him. He was working for a private security company, Kroll Inc. Kaszynski is a former St. Paul police officer and also worked as a police officer in Bemidji.

34. Army Reserve Maj. Stuart Anderson, 44, of Peosta, Iowa, a native of west-central Minnesota, died Jan. 7, 2006, in a helicopter crash in northern Iraq.

35. Roland C. Barvels, 42, of Aberdeen, S.D., a native of Fairmont, died Jan. 18, 2006 when a roadside bomb hit his convoy near Basra. Barvels was working as an international police liaison officer for DynCorp international.

36. Marine Lance Cpl. Adam J. VanAlstine, 21, of Cottage Grove, Minn., was killed Feb. 25, 2006 by a roadside bomb near Baghdad.

37. Army Cpl. Andrew J. Kemple, 23, of Cambridge, Army, died Feb. 12, 2006 when his Humvee came under small arms fire in Tikrit.

38. Army Chief Warrant Officer Eric W. Totten, 34, a native of St. Paul and Golden Valley, died May 5, 2006 when his helicopter fell into a ravine in Kunar Province in Afghanistan.

39. Marine Lance Cpl. Robert Posivio III, 22, of Sherburn, died May 23, 2006 when his Humvee was hit by a roadside bomb in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq.

40. Marine Capt. Nathanael J. Doring, 31, of Apple Valley, died after his AH-1 Cobra helicopter crashed May 27 during a maintenance test flight in Anbar province in Iraq.

41. National Guard Spc. Brent W. Koch, 22, of Morton, died June 16, 2006, in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq, when a bomb detonated near his military vehicle.

42. National Guard Spc. Kyle R. Miller, 19, of Willmar, died June 29, 2006, near Balad, Iraq, after a bomb exploded near his military vehicle.

43. Army Spc. Troy Carlin Linden, 22, of Rochert, died July 8, 2006, in Al Anbar province when a roadside bomb went off near the Humvee he was driving.

44. Army Spc. Qixing Lee, 20, of Minneapolis, died Aug. 27, 2006, when a roadside bomb exploded near his Bradley armored personal carrier during combat operations in Taji, Iraq.

45. National Guard Staff Sgt. Joshua Robert Hanson, 27, of Dent, died Aug. 30, 2006, near Khalidiyah, Iraq, of injuries suffered when a bomb detonated near his military vehicle.

46. Marine Cpl. Johnathan Benson, 21, of North Branch, died Sept. 9, 2006, at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, after being injured June 17 when a bomb exploded under his vehicle near Habbaniyah, Iraq.

47. Army Staff Sgt. Kevin M. Witte, 27, of Beardsley, died Oct. 20, 2006 in Baghdad of injuries suffered when a bomb exploded near his vehicle during a combat patrol.

48. National Guard Spc. Bryan T. McDonough, 22, of Maplewood, died Dec. 2, 2006, after a bomb exploded near the Humvee he was riding in near Fallujah.

49. National Guard Spc. Corey J. Rystad, 20, of Red Lake Falls, killed Dec. 2, 2006, in same blast that killed McDonough.

50. National Guard Spc. Nicholas Turcotte, 23, of Maple Grove, killed Dec. 4, 2006, when the armored vehicle he was in rolled over near Nasiriyah.

51. National Guard Sgt. James M. Wosika Jr., 24, of St. Paul, killed Jan. 9, 2007 by a bomb while on foot patrol in Fallujah.

52. National Guard Sgt. Maj. Michael Mettille, 44, of West St. Paul died Feb. 1, 2007, at Camp Adder in Iraq of a non-combat-related injury.

53. Army Sgt. William J. Beardsley, 25, of Coon Rapids, died Feb. 26, 2007, in Diwaniyah, Iraq, when a bomb exploded near his vehicle.

54. Marine Sgt. Chad M. Allen, 25, of Maple Lake, died Feb. 28, 2007, in Al Anbar, Iraq, during combat.

55. Minnesota National Guard Sgt. Greg N. Riewer, 28, of Frazee, killed March 23, 2007, while on patrol in Fallujah when his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb.

56. Army Spc. Sean K. McDonald, 21, of Rosemount, died March 25, 2007, in Baghdad of wounds suffered when a bomb exploded near his vehicle.

57. Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Olsen, 20, of Eagan, was shot in the back and killed April 2, 2007, in Al Anbar Province.

58. Army Spc. Conor Masterson, 21, of Woodbury, died April 7, 2007 in eastern Afghanistan when a bomb exploded near his vehicle.

59. Army Sgt. Joshua Schmit, 26, of Willmar, was killed April 14, 2007, when a bomb exploded near his vehicle in Fallujah, Iraq.

60. Army Spc. Robert Dixon, 28, of Minneapolis, was killed May 6, 2007, by an improvised explosive device in Baghdad, Iraq.

61. Army Sgt. Jason Alan Schumann, 23, of Hawley, was killed May 19, 2007 by a roadside bomb in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq.

62. Army Tony Hebert, 19, an infantry machine gunner from Lake City, died during combat June 21, 2007 in Iraq.

63. Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Thompson, 26, of North Mankato was killed Aug. 6, 2007, by a bomb during a house search in Baqubah.

64. Army Sgt. Andrew Nelson, 22, of Moorhead, was killed Aug. 29, 2007, in Muqdadiyah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit.

65. William Juneau, 36, of Rush City, was killed Nov. 26, 2007, outside of Baghdad when his convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device. He was training Iraqi police officers as a contractor with Falls Church, Va.-based DynCorp International.

66. Sgt. 1st Class John J. Tobiason, 42, of Hayfield, died Nov. 28, 2007, in Baghdad of injuries suffered when he was hit by a stray bullet. His family said the bullet came from a fight between Iraqi police and insurgents. Tobiason grew up in Bloomington and graduated from Kennedy High School.

67. Army Spc. Randy W. Pickering, 31, of Bovey, died Dec. 9, 2007, in Baghdad of injuries sustained in a non-combat related incident that was under investigation.

68. Army Pfc. Joshua R. Anderson, 24, of Jordan, died Jan. 2, 2008, in Kamasia, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device exploded near his vehicle.

69. Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Pionk, 30, of Eveleth and a native of Oliver, Wis., died Jan. 9, 2008, along with five other soldiers when an explosive detonated during combat operations in Sinsil, Iraq. His father said Pionk led a squad into a building that had been booby-trapped and terrorists detonated a bomb from a remote location.

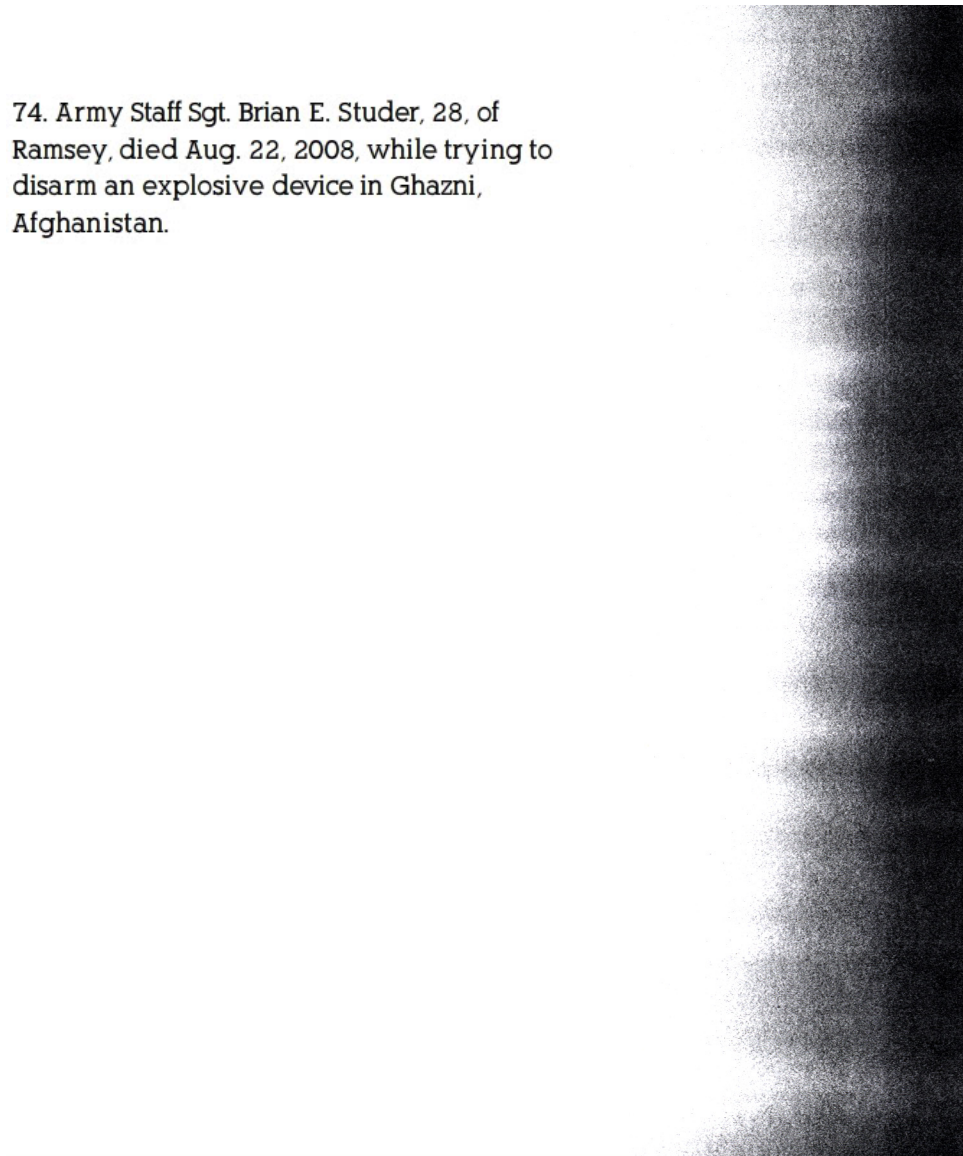
70. Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Ryan Kahler, 29, of Granite Falls died Jan. 26, 2008, in FOB Fenty, Afghanistan, after being shot in Waygul, Afghanistan. The department was investigating the death and said Kahler might have been shot by an Afghan guard allied with U.S. forces who mistook him for an enemy combatant.

71. Paul Johnson-Reuben, of Minneapolis, was confirmed dead March 27, 2008. He was one of five employees of Crescent Security Group, a Kuwait-based private security firm, kidnapped Nov. 16, 2006, by men in Iraqi police uniforms who ambushed a convoy they were escorting. He was 39 when he was abducted.

72. Army Spec. Gregory B. Rundell, 21, of North St. Paul, was killed by a sniper March 26, 2008, while manning a guard tower at a base just north of Baghdad.

73. Army Spc. Jacob J. Fairbanks, 22, of St. Paul, died April 9, 2008, of non-combat-related injuries in Baghdad.

74. Army Staff Sgt. Brian E. Studer, 28, of Ramsey, died Aug. 22, 2008, while trying to disarm an explosive device in Ghazni, Afghanistan.



The Political Animal
Politics and Policy of
Minnesota from
Pioneer Press Reporters

online blog - September 2, 2008

Pawlenty Wednesday will Attend
Army Sergeant's Funeral

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty will take a break from Republican National Convention business Wednesday to attend funeral services for Staff Sergeant Brian Studer at Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel at noon. Pawlenty also ordered flags to be flown at half-staff at the state Capitol Wednesday.

Office of the Governor, Tim Pawlenty

Flags at Half Staff from
January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008

The flags at the Capitol building in St. Paul were lowered to half-staff 6 times over the course of 2008. What follows are the occasions for which this occurred.

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ORDERS U.S. AND
STATE FLAGS AT HALF-STAFF IN
HONOR OF STAFF SERGEANT BRIAN STUDER --
September 2, 2008

Governor Tim Pawlenty today ordered that the United States flag and the State of Minnesota flag be flown at half-staff at the State Capitol Complex from sunrise until sunset on Wednesday, September 3, 2008, in honor and remembrance of Staff Sergeant Brian Studer, who died in the line of duty on Friday, August 22.

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ORDERS UNITED
STATES AND STATE FLAGS AT HALF-
STAFF IN HONOR OF INTERSTATE 35W
BRIDGE MEMORIAL DAY

-- July 31, 2008

Governor Tim Pawlenty today ordered that all United States and Minnesota flags be flown at half-staff at the State Capitol Complex from sunrise until sunset on Friday, August 1, 2008, in honor and remembrance of those who were killed or injured when the Interstate 35W bridge collapsed.

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ORDERS U.S. AND
STATE FLAGS AT HALF-STAFF IN
HONOR OF MEMORIAL DAY

-- May 23, 2008

Governor Tim Pawlenty today ordered that all U.S. and Minnesota flags be flown at half-staff on state property from sunrise until noon on Monday, May 26, 2008, in honor and remembrance of the sacrifices of those brave men and women who gave their lives in service to our country.

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ORDERS U.S. AND
STATE FLAGS AT HALF-STAFF ON
THURSDAY IN HONOR OF PEACE OFFICERS
MEMORIAL DAY

-- May 14, 2008

Governor Tim Pawlenty has ordered that United States and Minnesota flags be flown at half-staff on state property from sunrise until sunset on Thursday, May 15, 2008, in honor of the federal, state, and municipal officers who have been killed or disabled in the line of duty. President Bush has also ordered the United States flag at half-staff at all federal buildings on that day and requested that all

appropriate officials of all units of government direct that the United States flag be flown at half-staff.

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ORDERS U.S. AND
STATE FLAGS AT HALF-STAFF IN
HONOR OF FIREFIGHTER JEREMY JYLKA

-- May 2, 2008

Governor Tim Pawlenty today ordered that the United States flag and the State of Minnesota flag be flown at half-staff at the State Capitol Complex from sunrise until sunset on Monday, May 5, 2008, in honor and remembrance of Pine City firefighter Jeremy Jylka, who died in the line of duty on Tuesday, April 29.

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ORDERS U.S. AND
STATE FLAGS AT HALF-STAFF IN
HONOR OF SPECIALIST JACOB J. FAIRBANKS --
April 17, 2008

Governor Tim Pawlenty today ordered that the United States flag and the State of Minnesota flag be flown at half-staff at the State Capitol Complex from sunrise until sunset on Friday, April 18, 2008, in honor and remembrance of Specialist Jacob J. Fairbanks.

Office of the Governor, Tim Pawlenty

Governor's Official Proclamation:

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer was born in Austin, Minnesota, and raised in Ramsey, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer graduated from Elk River Senior High School, Elk River, Minnesota, in 1999; and

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer enlisted in the United States Army upon graduating from high school; and

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer was a member of the 720th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 28th Transportation Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Mannheim, Germany; and

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer was stationed in Germany, South Korea, Iraq, and Afghanistan and aspired to work for the HALO Trust organization. His family and friends knew him to be a kind and intelligent man, committed to serving others; and

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer was a devoted soldier and selfless leader. He loved serving his country and did so with great pride; and

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer died a hero fighting for freedom on Friday, August 22, 2008, in Ghazni, Afghanistan, while serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS: Staff Sergeant Brian Studer is survived by his mother, Ellen Hanson; father, Gene Studer; sisters, Crystal and Chellee; brother, Philip; and other loving family and friends; and

WHEREAS: Visitation for Staff Sergeant Brian Studer will be held Wednesday, September 3, 2008, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, Fort Snelling, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS: A funeral service for Staff Sergeant Brian Studer will be held Wednesday, September 3, 2008, at 12:00 p.m. at Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, Fort Snelling, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS: Interment with full military honors will be held Wednesday, September 3, 2008, at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS: The State of Minnesota thanks Staff Sergeant Brian Studer for his dedicated service to the people of this country, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, TIM PAWLENTY, Governor of Minnesota, do hereby order all U.S. flags and Minnesota flags be flown at half-staff at the Capitol Complex, including state buildings, monuments, and grounds in proximity to and including the Minnesota State Capitol, from sunrise until sunset on Wednesday, September 3, 2008, in honor and remembrance of Staff Sergeant Brian Studer.

THREE FUNERALS
AND A MEMORIAL

A Funeral Service at Salerno FOB,
Afghanistan.

Cy Schultz was Brian's good friend and fellow soldier. They were together on a mission when Brian was killed.

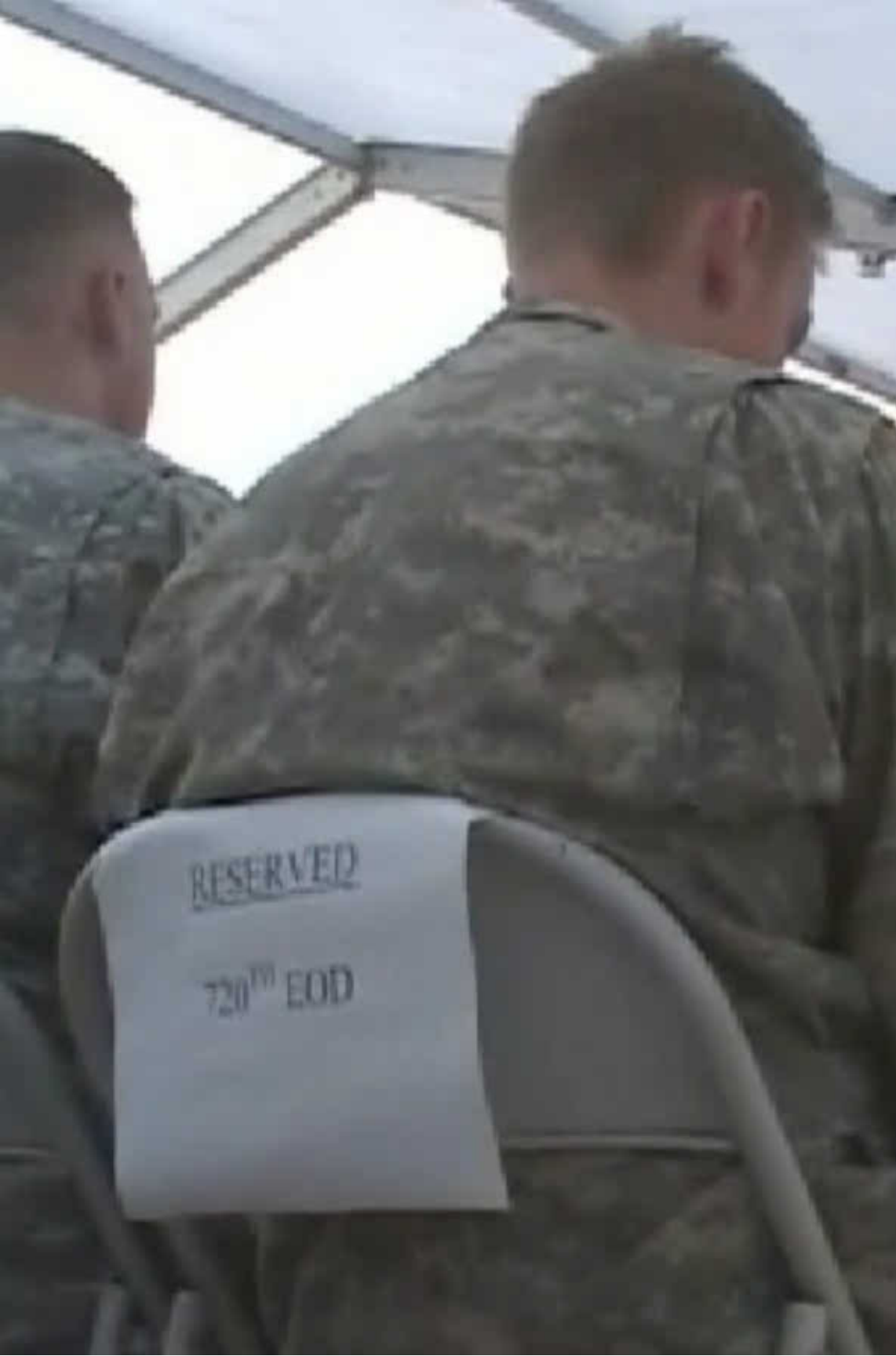
He spoke at Brian's funeral in Afghanistan, about a week after he was killed. I don't know what Cy said; I haven't been able to bring myself to watch the Afghanistan funeral services in full. I've only watched it with the sound off.

We later met in person and got a chance to share stories about Brian.









The front row was reserved for the 720th EOD Unit (Explosive Ordinance Disposal). These are all guys that worked and lived with Brian every day over the last year in Afghanistan. In some ways, they knew him better than we did.



A Military Funeral - Mannheim, Germany

I don't have any details about this, really. The units or soldiers still on the base in Germany held memorial services around the same time as the one in Afghanistan and the one we had in Minnesota.



After all the planning and preparations and meetings and a rehearsal, the day had finally come. No more time to select music and images for the memorial slideshow. No more time to coordinate the movements and seating of the various generals, lieutenants, sergeants and other dignitaries like the governor. No more time to prepare myself for what was happening that day, September 2, 2008.

The day of the funeral.

We decided it was best to do a full military service with sergeants and generals speaking, full military pageantry with uniformed escorts and pallbearers. Military honors and awards were presented.

The Patriot Guard, a group of patriotic Americans, many of whom are veterans themselves, attend funerals of the fallen soldiers. They arrived on dozens of motorcycles with flags flying high. They were there to stand in solidarity and support of the price our family paid for freedom. They also performed a

secondary function of protecting our family from the prying eyes of the media or potential protesters. We were honored to have them there.

I later found out that they had to remove some of the media who were attempting to enter the church.

When the motorcade drove from the church to Fort Snelling National Cemetery, we passed by thousands of grave markers of those who had served in past and present wars. Brian was being laid to rest in this amazing place of honor.

Along the route we passed by the Bloomington Bomb Squad vehicles and staff. They were on duty for the Republican National Convention and asked to be repositioned to our location. As we drove past, they flashed their lights and had their hands on their hearts in respect. As the civilian counterpart to Brian's job, they knew of the dangers he faced everyday doing what he did.

A Military Funeral - Fort Snelling, Minnesota

Our family attended the funeral here in Minnesota. Military Chaplain Mike Lotzer officiated. The Minnesota National Guard videotaped and photographed the services for our family. That's where many of the following images come from.

My mother and sisters still haven't watched this video yet, a year later.





SFC Jay Wilson spoke on behalf of the 720th EOD. He was Brian's direct superior and was fortunately able to accompany the body and attend the funeral. He became the official "escort," they called it.

The rest of Brian's unit had to go back to work. Business as usual. The war doesn't stop for a funeral.

He shared stories about Brian's obsession with orange juice and Oreos. He referred to Brian as the "the Ogre." This was the nickname Brian's unit had given him while they were in Afghanistan. We actually didn't know he had a nickname until we heard it then. But everyone called him that, and it made people at the funeral smile. SFC Wilson had to take a moment to collect himself during the speech about Brian. I could tell that he knew Brian very, very well and that his loss was affecting him very deeply. We were glad to have someone that served directly with Brian to speak on his behalf.

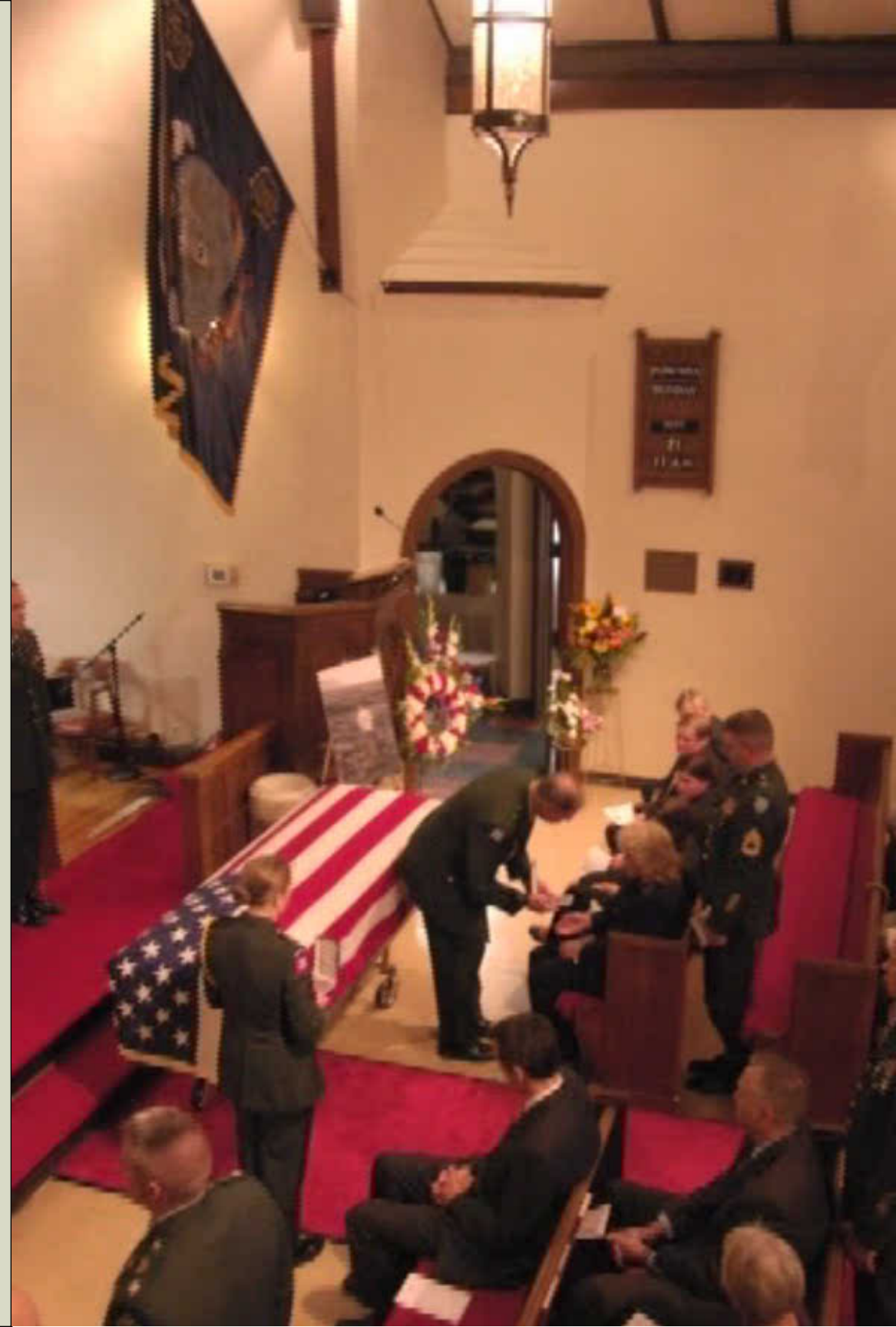


I remember being asked if my sisters and I wanted to speak prior to the service. None of us thought we could get through it, so we passed on the option. I think exactly what needed to be said, was said.

SFC Wilson read off the awards and their meanings as Mother received Brian's Purple Heart and Bronze Star from a general. These are some of the highest awards given for military service.

During the course of the services I looked over my shoulder to see the full church behind us. I remember an odd thing. The first couple of rows behind us were reserved for our extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The funny thing was no one sat in the row directly behind us. Why? Maybe they were respecting our privacy; maybe it was too much to deal with us so directly?

Either way, even with all of the family and friends around, I still felt we were so very isolated.















McKINNEY
ROY JR
PFC
US ARMY
WORLD WAR II
MAY 12 1920
MAY 14 2004
MAY 14 2004
MAY 14 2004

GEORGE
ALLEN
PFC
US ARMY
WORLD WAR II
MAY 12 1920
MAY 14 2004
MAY 14 2004

JAMES
EDWARD
FOUTZ
CPL
US MARINE CORPS
WORLD WAR II
DEC 20 1920
DEC 9 2006
BELOVED HUSBAND
AND FATHER

THOMAS F
LANGLANDS
PVT
US ARMY
WORLD WAR II
MAY 12 1920
MAY 14 2004







The funeral proceeded to the interment, with an outdoor ceremony at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. The funeral was attended by our family, friends, military, the Patriot Guard and the Bloomington Bomb Squad.

It is an intimate ceremony where they fold the flag above the casket, they play Taps on the trumpet, and they do the 21-gun salute, all of which are characteristic of military funerals. They hand-folded the flag into a triangle and gave it to my mother. That flag is the one that accompanied Brian's body from Afghanistan all the way back to Minnesota, only to be removed at the end of this ceremony.

We decided to do a military funeral over a religious one. We definitely didn't feel like a military family, but we aren't really a religious family, either, least of all Brian. We didn't believe "God told him it was time to go" or "He had better things and plans for Brian to work on." Those typical religious sentiments were hollow to us.



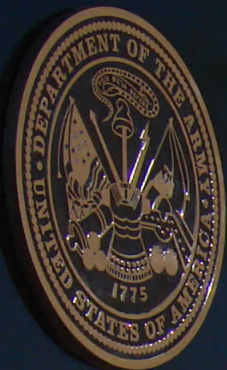
Bring out the flags, bring out the guns. We wanted to go full military. Because he died serving his country, he deserved all the country allows.

One of the soldiers jumped when the guns went off. They're not supposed to move, but he looked like a young kid, barely out of boot camp. It broke the intensity of the moment and helped me to remember to breathe.

Explosive Ordinance Disposal Memorial
Eglund Air Force Base, FL
May, 2009

Every year in May the EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) community comes together for a memorial to honor those who have fallen in the last year. This memorial was built across the street from the training school where Brian learned his craft at Eglund Air Force Base in Florida. It stands as a reminder for the risk and gravity involved in choosing this specific career path within the military.







During the ceremony they read all of the names of the EOD technicians who have lost their lives going as far back as the 1940s. Before that there wasn't a specific job title.

The names of the soldiers killed this past year are read last. The bronze plaques with their names are revealed after being read.



SFC MURPHY

37/01

SGT FRELIGH PHILLIP M.

04/02

SSG JUSTIN J. GALEWSKI

12/03

SSG BRIAN CRAIG

09/03

SSG VOELZ, KIMBERLY A.

02/04

SSG ROBSKY, JOSEPH E. JR.

02/04

SSG WONG, ELIJAH TAI WAH

02/05

SSG RAMEY, RICHARD P.

02/05

SSG STEFFENEY, ERIC M.

12/05

SSG SHEPHERD, KRISTOPHER L.

05/05

SSG JOHNNIE V. MASON

08/43

SSG RUSSELL J. VERDUGO

07/06

SGT ROLAND H. ENGWALL

09/07

SFG SCOTT R. SMITH

07/07

GSM JONATHAN M. LANKFORD

08/08

SSG JOSHUA P. MATTERO

04/08

SSG BRIAN E. STUDER

SFC LAWRENCE D. EZELL

The EOD community is very tight knit and everybody tries to attend every year if they are not deployed overseas. There were hundreds of people there. There were new graduates, soldiers currently serving, and retired EOD veterans from past wars. Families of the fallen soldiers are always welcome, and everyone is honored by their presence.

This ceremony was almost as moving as the funeral itself. Nine months had passed since the funeral, but it still felt like yesterday.

That evening, after the memorial, my family attended a ball put on by the EOD, where we met many of the soldiers Brian served with. Many had finished their tour in Afghanistan and were either back in Germany or stationed here in the States. We heard many stories of Brian's adventures overseas.

My family and I were given metal bracelets by Brian's unit. They all wore them in his memory. Inscribed on the inside band was a special message:

"You lost a son and we lost a brother. Our hearts and prayers will always be with you."







Here are war memorials near Brian's last base in Mannheim, Germany and another located at the 21st Theater Support Command in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

In the spring Mother went to Switzerland on business and took the train to Germany for the weekend to visit Brian's old base in Mannheim. There she met with a few of the soldiers in Brian's unit still serving at the base.

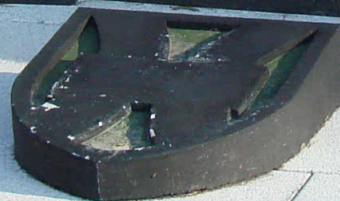
They drove her around to a few memorials to fallen soldiers in the area and took her to dinner where she got to hear more stories about "the Ogre" as they called him. I think it was a special weekend for her to be able to see where he lived and meet the people he worked with. She brought back pictures and stories from his friends.



OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN
ENDURING ALL AND GIVING ALL
THAT MANKIND MIGHT LIVE IN FREEDOM AND IN PEACE
THEY JOIN THAT GLORIOUS BAND OF HEROES
WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

THESE NAMES ARE
THE NAMES OF
THE MEN AND
WOMEN WHO
DIED FOR
THE FREEDOM
OF THE WORLD
AND THE
PEACE OF
THE FUTURE

THESE NAMES ARE
THE NAMES OF
THE MEN AND
WOMEN WHO
DIED FOR
THE FREEDOM
OF THE WORLD
AND THE
PEACE OF
THE FUTURE



B R I A N & M E



We were still living on the farm when this photo was taken. Brian and I were chasing through the house, as usual. I don't remember who was chasing whom. He tripped and landed head first into a large glass jar of coins that held a bedroom door open. It was full of pennies. The glass broke and Mother ran over and picked him up. His whole face was covered in blood. She pulled him up on top of the kitchen counter and started wiping off his face to see what was there. She didn't know if he was missing an eye, or what. It turned out to be only a gash on his forehead.

He still has that scar on his forehead. That's typical of us goofing around and making trouble.



Here are Brian and I with our first dog Mandy. I don't remember playing with it all that much, but I do remember that she barked all the time.

The picture on the following page is my sister Crystal, Brian, and me climbing on the "dragon" at the old Science Museum in St. Paul. Brian loved going there to see all the technology and dinosaurs. Science was at the foundation of his future interests.







Brian and I played many things together. We were pretty spoiled in the toy department. One funny thing I recall is how our game playing sorted itself out. Being the older brother, I always tried to get my way.

If we were playing G.I.Joe, I was the good guys and he was Cobra, the bad guys.

If we were playing He-Man I played the good guys and had Castle Greyskull and all those team members. Brian took the side of Skeletor and all the legion of monsters that followed him.

He never really cared what side he was on, as long as he could play along.

In later years when my sisters Crystal and Chellee were old enough, Brian and I took equal relish in torturing them by stealing their Barbies or chasing them around.

Brian graduated from Elk River High School in 1999. He would join the military that summer.

Brian and I were rarely in the same school at the same time. We were just far enough apart in age so that when I was in junior high, he was still in elementary school. When I was in high school, he was in junior high.

I remember when he was about to start seventh grade at the big junior high, which was a lot different from elementary school. Brian loved to wear sweatpants, and I teased him about it all the time. I told him that he couldn't wear them to junior high because someone would pull them down right there in the middle of the school. I think it scared him enough; despite hating jeans he never wore sweatpants to school, ever.

Brian studied hard in school and never had trouble with grades or anything like that. In fact, his last two years of high school were spent at the local community college, where he earned college and high school credit for the same classes.



Brian graduated from boot camp in late 1999. I wasn't able to attend the graduation ceremony. Mother was there. I wasn't even around when he joined the military. I was going to college in Chicago at the time.

I found out over the phone that Brian had canceled his courses for the fall semester at the local community college and had been meeting with an Army recruiter over the summer. Brian did things his own way. He could have gone to any college he wanted, but he chose the military instead. He wrote Mom a note telling her his intentions. He knew if he told her ahead of time, she would try to talk him out of it.

They call those funny-looking, army-issue glasses BCG's, a.k.a. Birth Control Glasses for their uncanny ability to make the ladies run in the other direction.





US ARMY FLW 97.57



The previous image is one of the few pictures I have of him while serving in Iraq. This was the first time he was deployed to a combat zone. He stayed in Iraq for about year. There aren't many pictures of what happened over there or what he did from day to day. Mother has had this picture on the fridge for years. It's still there today.

This period is a mostly mysterious part of his life. Brian would call or email on occasion and mostly tell us he was fine or bored. He would request Oreo cookies and powdered drinks to make the nasty warm water tolerable. Brian also spent hours online ordering computer stuff and gear and packs to use. He had it all sent to Mother's house, who repackaged it and forwarded it on to him overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Among his belongings that were sent back to us from his base were many unopened packages of things he bought but never got the chance to use. Much of it was still in its original wrappings or FedEx box.

After he had returned from Iraq, I once asked Brian if he ever had to shoot anyone. He said once in a convoy at night somebody was shooting at their group. They all shot back and the enemy ran away into the night. They didn't stick around long enough to go see if they actually shot anyone.

I think there was a lot more going on than he let on, but he didn't want to worry us.



(previous page & right)

Some of Brian's buddies in the 720th EOD told us about this picture. They said the Ogre (Brian's nick-name) was standing on this mound giving the local kids his usual "Don't even think about it" stare. The always-curious kids were always playing nearby and were very interested in everything the army was doing. Brian was trying to keep them out of an area particularly dangerous because of live ordinance and explosives behind him. There are countless stories from both Afghanistan and Iraq about pets, domesticated animals or kids wandering into an area littered with live mines and getting severely injured or killed in the process.





This is Brian in an EOD technician blast suit. It helps protect the soldier when attempting to disarm or handle high explosives. They also utilize numerous other tools like probes and shovels and even a remote control robot.

In the belongings we got back from the military, many of the things included were tools that Brian used. The military retains all Army-issued items, but Brian had a ton of things he purchased on his own. If he didn't like something they gave him, or if he found something better online, he would just order it and have it sent to himself.











MEDALS
AWARDS
HONORS

REPORT OF CASUALTY

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
2220-001

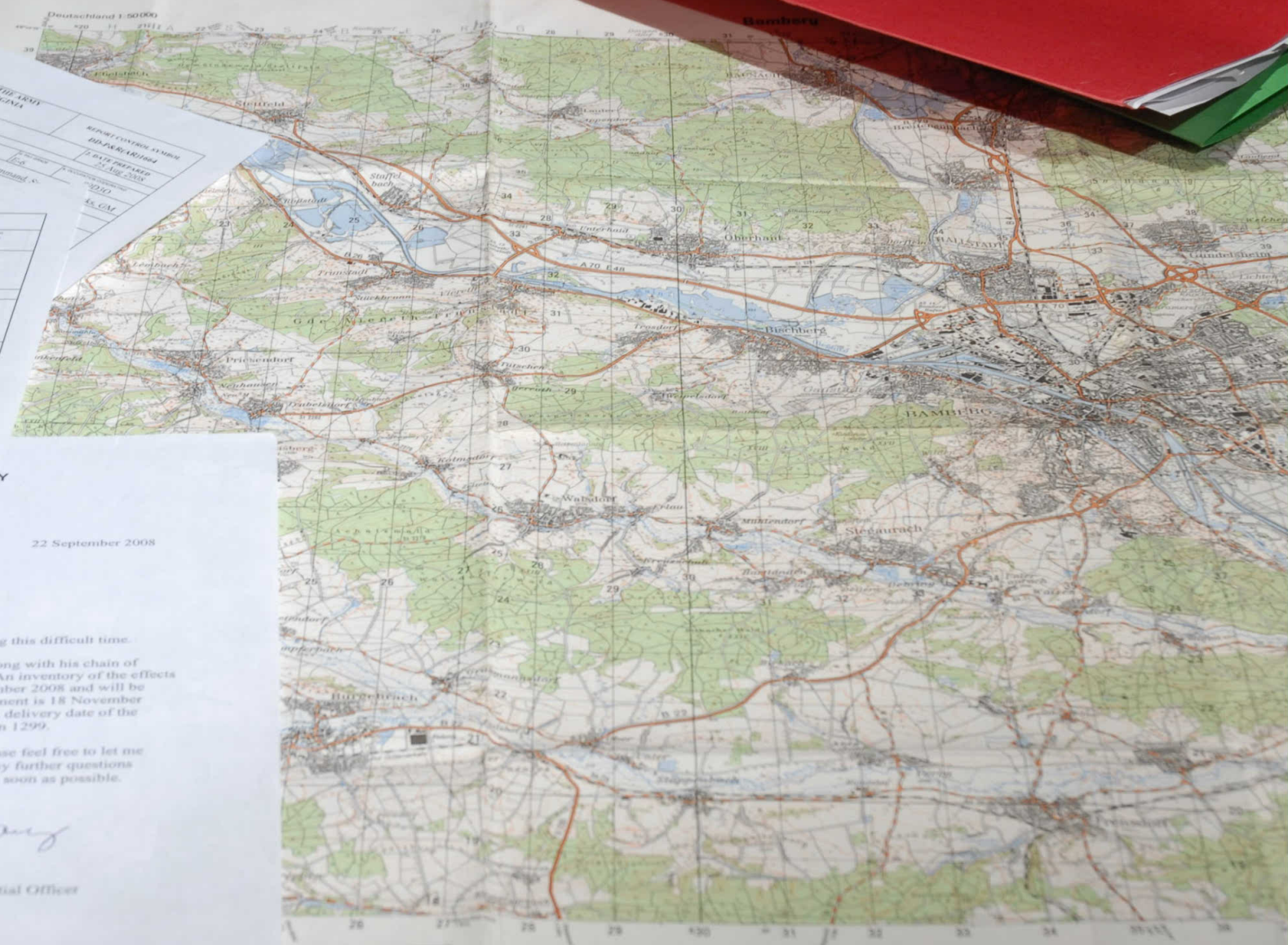
NAME OF DECEASED: **Sluder, Brian Edward**
DATE OF DEATH: **18 July 1990**
PLACE OF DEATH: **18th MP Brigade, Mannheim, GERMANY**

NAME OF NEXT OF KIN: **Mary Hanson**
ADDRESS: **16470 Halas Circle NW, Ramsey, MN 55303**

CAUSE OF DEATH: **Boat injuries**

RELATIONSHIP TO DECEASED: **Mother**

DECLARATION: **Ramsey, MN 55303-3190**



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
28th TRANSPORTATION BATTALION
CMR 418
APG AE 09058

22 September 2008



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

AERTR-A
Ellen Mary Hanson
16470 Halas Circle NW
Ramsey, MN 55303

Dear Mrs. Hanson:

Once again, I would like to express to you my deepest sympathy during this difficult time. I have inventoried all of SSG Brian E. Sluder's personal belongings along with his chain of command. Your son's personal effects have been forwarded to you. An inventory of the effects is enclosed. The effects were picked up by transportation on 12 September 2008 and will be shipped by commercial seafair. The expected delivery date of this shipment is 18 November 2008. You can contact FT. Snelling, Minnesota for the status and exact delivery date of the shipment. The number to FT. Snelling will be enclosed on the DD Form 1299.

My sympathy is extended to you during your time of bereavement. Please feel free to let me know of any other way that I can be of assistance to you. If you have any further questions please contact me at heldy.abueg@us.army.mil and I will contact you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Heldy B. Abueg
HELDY B. ABUEG
CPT, OD
Summary Court-Martial Officer

During the course of the last year we have received many things. There were more than 21 footlockers and a wooden pallet full of Brian's belongings from Afghanistan and those he had stored in Germany. Each box was labeled and cataloged with an accompanying inventory list. The weird thing was that every single individual item, even DVD's and coins, were bagged and tagged with labels. His clothing had been cleaned and bagged. There was not one hint of sand from Afghanistan in his boots or on the Velcro of the bags or packs. Everything was sterile and had no feeling of being owned and worn. I'm not sure what I was expecting when we opened the boxes, but mostly I felt empty.

Among the other items we've received are countless letters of condolences from state and federal legislators. The White house, Pentagon, Department of Defense and State Department all sent out their letters thanking us for the sacrifice our family made. Most have been read once and tossed into an ever-growing box of correspondence.

The hardest to read are the official casualty reports which contain transcripts from various soldiers and witnesses in the area when Brian was killed. It seemed they interviewed anyone military within 10 miles. Random reports ranged from a truck driver hearing an explosion who never saw anything to the report from Brian's buddy in the field who was on the mission with him.

I checked out the location where he was killed in Ghazni, Afghanistan, on GoogleEarth. It looked liked some insignificant little village in the middle of the desert in the middle of nowhere. So far from home.

PURPLE HEART

Awarded for:

"Being wounded or killed in any action against an enemy of the United States or as a result of an act of any such enemy or opposing armed forces"

First Awarded:

22 February 1932

Awarded by:

The Purple Heart is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those who have been wounded or killed while serving on or after April 5, 1917 with the U.S. military.

BRONZE STAR

Awarded for:
Heroic or meritorious achievement or service.

First Awarded:
4 February 1944

Awarded by:
The Bronze Star Medal is a United States Armed Forces individual military decoration that may be awarded for bravery, acts of merit, or meritorious service. When awarded for bravery, it is the fourth-highest combat award of the U.S. Armed Forces and the ninth highest military award (including both combat and non-combat awards) in the order of precedence of U.S. military decorations.





THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HAS AWARDED THE

PURPLE HEART

ESTABLISHED BY GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON
AT NEWBURGH, NEW YORK, AUGUST 7, 1782
TO
STAFF SERGEANT BRIAN E. STUDER
UNITED STATES ARMY

FOR WOUNDS RECEIVED
IN ACTION

ON 22 AUGUST 2008
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS 23D DAY OF AUGUST 2008

[Signature]
THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY



[Signature]
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING: THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AUTHORIZED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER, 24 AUGUST 1942 HAS AWARDED
THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL
STAFF SERGEANT BRIAN E. STUDER
UNITED STATES ARMY

FOR exceptionally meritorious service from 11 August 2007 to 22 August 2008, while serving as a member of Joint Task Force Paladin, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Staff Sergeant Studer's personal courage and commitment to mission accomplishment in a combat zone under the most extreme of circumstances greatly contributed towards the defeat of terrorism and the development of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Staff Sergeant Studer's outstanding service reflects great credit on him, Joint Task Force Paladin, Combined Joint Task Force-101, and the United States Army.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS 23D DAY OF AUGUST 2008

[Signature]
THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY



[Signature]
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY



Through his nine years in service and after his death he was awarded numerous medals and awards including:

The Purple Heart

The Bronze Star

Afghanistan Campaign Medal

Iraq Campaign Medal

Global War on Terrorism Service Medal

Army Achievement Medal

It would take many hours of research and digging to find them all and understand their individual meanings. Included are but a sampling of what we have.





Included in the wood chest memory box are the 21-gun salute bullet shells from the funeral in Minnesota. We also had sent to us the shells from the 21-gun salute in Afghanistan. After firing three times, the seven soldiers collected the shells from the ground and had them sent to us.

Among Brian's belongings were also military challenge coins.

"A challenge coin is a small coin or medallion (usually military), bearing an organization's insignia or emblem and is carried by the organization members. They are given to prove membership when challenged and to enhance morale."

We had no idea what these were or what they meant until we started to receive them from officers at the funerals and memorials. It's a symbol of respect, and to be given one is an honor.

Brian's dog tags he was wearing when killed were found nearby. His unit had the dents and damage hammered out and then polished up to a mirror finish. This is the only true thing we have that we know was with him those last moments. Since we had a closed casket service, for obvious reasons, this is our tangible piece of Brian we can touch and hold and remember what was.

Also in the memory box are a few mementos like the Oreo cookies displayed at his funeral services in Germany. The soldiers there remembered his obsession with Oreos and had them sent to us after the services.



SFC Jay Wilson had all the pins and ribbons placed within a case, as they would appear on Brian's uniform if he were still alive.

This triangular wooden case also contains the folded flag given to my mother at the funeral. It was the flag that was draped over his coffin from Afghanistan to Dover, Delaware, then to Minnesota. It was only removed at the very end of the funeral ceremonies at Fort Snelling.



LEFT BEHIND

OCTOBER 2008

We were informed that Brian's grave marker had been installed, and I drove out to Fort Snelling alone to check it out. The dirt was still a little fresh, and some grass had begun to grow in the late fall.

I had left my position in Honolulu, HI in October and moved back to Minnesota to be closer to family and friends. I didn't know what to expect when returning home, but I knew that I wouldn't be able to continue with the way things were before Brian's death.

The construction and housing industries were in freefall.

Barack Obama was weeks away from winning the presidency.

I reconnected with some old friends and colleagues from when I previously lived in Minnesota. I also began spending time with some new friends I met during the time I was home for the funeral.





✠
KAPRA
MERIDETH
QUAIN
S SGT
US ARMY
PERSIAN GULF
FEB 13 1970
JUN 26 2008
BELOVED SISTER
DAUGHTER FRIEND

✠
KENNETH E
RENZ
MCMAZ
US NAVY
WORLD WAR II
NOV 20 1925
SEP 9 2006
BELOVED HUSBAND
FATHER GRANDPA

✠
GERALD
EDWARD
ANDERSON
DN
USAF
WORLD WAR II
MAY 20 1923
AUG 23 2006

✠
DOROTHY E
JUL 31 1949
SEP 6 2006
WIFE OF
AT3
BRUCE D
ANDERSON
USN
ACTS 20 24 WIFE
MOTHER & SISTER

✠
CAROLE L
AUG 31 1926
AUG 23 2006
WIFE OF
SGT
THOMAS J
LAUGHLIN
USN
WIFE MOTHER
GRANDMA FRIEND

✠
JOHN
THEODORE
BETZ
A2C
US AIR FORCE
KOREA
FEB 1921
✠
BRIAN
EDWARD
STUDER
SSG
US ARMY
AFGHANISTAN
IRAQ
JUL 16 1980
AUG 22 2008
BELOVED SON
AND BROTHER



DECEMBER 2008

The first Christmas without Brian was hard. As a family we still did the usual presents and big meal, but there was a somber and quiet tone to everything. I felt like we were on autopilot.

Mother bought a little potted evergreen and decorated it like a mini Christmas tree. She placed in it a juice box and strung little toys and trinkets on the branches. The tree was placed alongside his grave.

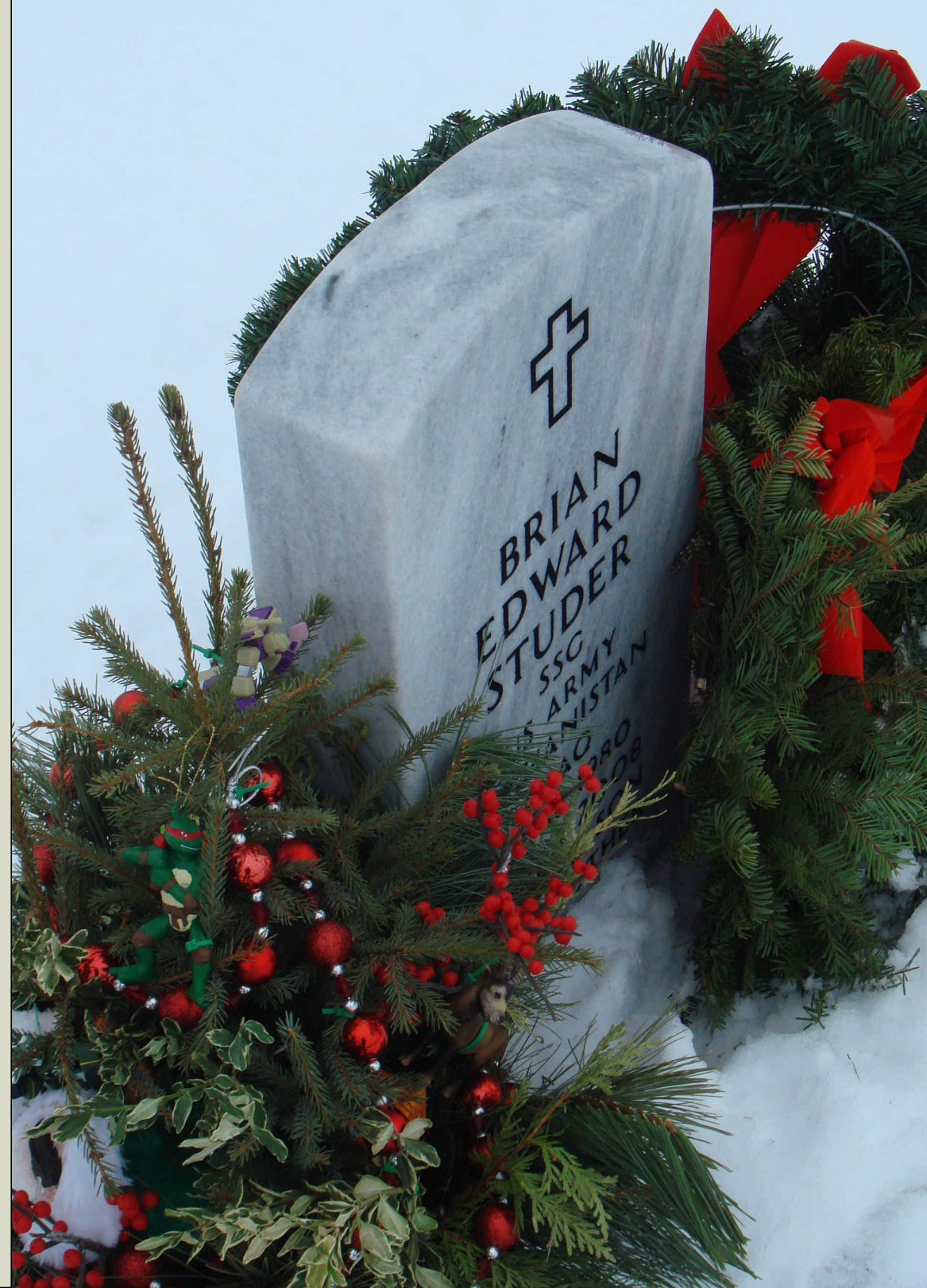
When I went out to visit, I noticed others had been there and had placed wreathes as well. Were they friends or relatives, we don't know, but it was nice to see. Snow had covered the bare earth and stubby grass from fall.

Around this time we received many of Brian's things from Afghanistan and Germany: Dozens and dozens of footlockers full of gear, tools, clothes, notebooks, movies and personal items. It would take us a long time to sort through everything.

I began to see a counselor through the VA shortly after Christmas. We met once a week to talk about Brian, my move home and my family. It helped to share what I was going through with someone outside the situation.

The economy continued to tank.

A month earlier I attended a weekend retreat in Wisconsin for survivor families of those who died in service. My chaplain convinced me to make a speech, telling my story, and it went very well. It felt good to get some of what I was thinking out in the open. I met a lot of other families in similar situations to mine. Everyone had a story to tell - killed in combat, sniper, car accident, suicide and many more, each more tragic than the last.





GERALD
EDWARD
ANDERSON
CPL
USAF
WORLD WAR II
MAY 20 1925
AUG 26 2004

CURTIS
CHARLES
COK
1911
1987

CAROLE L
AUG 31 1936
AUG 23 2006
WIFE OF
SGT
THOMAS J
LAUGHLIN
USA
WIFE MOTHER
GRANDMA FRIEND

JOSEPH R
LEVERNIER SR
WTS
WORLD WAR II
JUL 15 1918
AUG 9 2000
LIFE PARTNER

CLARENCE D
ROBINSON
1911
1987

JOHN
THEODORE
BETZ
A2C
US AIR FORCE
KOREA
FEB 10 1934
2006

CHARLES R
LIVERSEED
PVT
US ARMY
KOREA
JUN 7 1936
AUG 8 2005
LOVED BROTHER

JAMES R
BROWN
SFC
US MARINE CORPS
KOREA
JUN 22 1920
JUL 22 2005
DAUGHTER SISTER
DAUGHTER BROTHER
DAUGHTER GRANDFATHER

NORMA
JEAN
MAY 3 1947
AUG 8 2005
WIFE OF
AMESS
THOMAS A
HELMERICK
USN
BELOVED WIFE
MOTHER GRANDMA

BRIAN
EDWARD
STUDER
US
AF

JUNE 2009

Mother, my sisters and I went out to Fort Snelling for an unveiling ceremony of a new memorial to all the soldiers that served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We placed flowers and visited graveside for awhile. A single stone had been placed on top of his marker, so I followed suit and added a second.

In May our family went to the EOD Memorial in Florida where we met most of the guys serving in Brian's unit, the 720th EOD out of Mannheim, Germany.

The stock market had hit a new low, and unemployment rose to record levels.

The firm I use to work for in Hawaii closed its doors due to the collapse of the construction business. There would be no returning to my old job even if I wanted to now.

I continued with my weekly counselor visits at the VA.

Brian's birthday was coming up in a few weeks.





KENNETH E.
BENZ
MONROE
US NAVY
WORLD WAR II
NOV 20 1925
SEP 9 2006
BELOVED HUSBAND
FATHER GRANDFATHER



DOROTHY E.
JUL 31 1949
FEB 6 2006
WIFE OF
AT3
JOHN D.
ANDERSON
USN
ACTS 20 24 WIFE
MOTHER & SISTER

GERALD
EDWARD
ANDERSON
CPL
USAF
WORLD WAR II
MAY 20 1925
AUG 21 2006

CAROL L.
AUG 31 1936
AUG 23 2006
WIFE OF
1ST
THOMAS J.
LAUGHLIN
USA
WIFE MOTHER
GRANDMOTHER FRIEND

BRIAN
EDWARD
STUDER
SSG
US ARMY
AFGHANISTAN



JOSEPH R.
LEVENSIER SR.
WTS
US NAVY
WORLD WAR II
JUL 10 1908
AUG 9 2006
1ST ENTERPRISE

JOHN
THEODORE
BETZ
A2C
US AIR FORCE
KOREA
FEB 10 1934
AUG 24 2006
BELOVED HUSBAND
AND FATHER

CHARLES R.
LIVERSEED
PVT
US ARMY
KOREA
JUN 7 1936
AUG 8 2005
BELOVED BROTHER
FATHER UNCLE



AUGUST 2009 - DAY 365

On the one-year anniversary my mom, sisters and I came out to Fort Snelling to commemorate Brian's death. We laid out flowers and flags and spent a few moments milling around. We were all so surprised how fast a year went. It still felt like everything happened a few months ago.

My sister was starting to show. She was expecting a baby boy in October. His middle name was going to be Brian, in honor of our brother.

Many banks failed with many more getting bailouts to stay afloat. Unemployment continues to rise.

The Iraq war seems to be winding down as things get worse in Afghanistan. I hear about more and more casualties everyday.

In September I attended the workshop with Monica and began writing this book.

I continued to see a counselor through the VA.



✠
DOROTHY E
JUL 31 1949
SEP 6 2006
WIFE OF
AT3
BRUCE D
ANDERSON
USN
ACTS 20-24 WIFE
MOTHER & SISTER

✠
JOHN
THEODORE
RETZ
AFC
US AIR FORCE
BORN 11
MAY 1914
DIED 1984
MAY 19 1984
MILWAUKEE WISCONSIN
AND SISTER

✠
BRIAN
EDWARD
STUDD
SSG
US ARMY
AFGHANISTAN
IRAC





My name is Philip Studer. My younger brother, SSG Brian E. Studer, was killed in Ghazni, Afghanistan on August 22, 2008. He was only 28 years old.

He will not be forgotten.

I heard from very few relatives and friends around the anniversary. I took that very hard and became angry. To me, they had forgotten or moved on and I had not. It had only been 365 days, I thought to myself. How does one simultaneously remember and move on with their life? I'm still working this out in my head.

He will not be forgotten.



COLOPHON

A PROJECT BY
Monica Haller

BOOK BY
Philip Studer

PHOTOS
Philip Studer, Brian Studer, Ellen Hanson, Crystal Studer, Chellee Hanson, Jay Wilson, Cy Schultz, Beau Martindale, Monica Haller

VIDEO STILLs
Courtesy of the Minnesota National Guard, Visual Information Department

TEXT
Philip Studer, Newspaper and Media Clippings cited in-text

COPY EDITING
Jane Austin, Kurt Froehlich

TEMPLATE DESIGN
Matthew Rezac, Monica Haller

SOFTWARE DESIGN
Mark Fox

PRINTING
Lulu.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT
Bush Foundation
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation
McKnight Foundation
Minnesota Center for Book Arts
St. Paul Academy and Summit School



This book is the result of the author's courage and focus at the Veterans Book Workshop, where we work to make manageable and material personal archives of images, words and memories from the current wars.

This book is one of many made in the Veterans Book Workshop. Each emerged from different circumstances and each finds its own unique use. One veteran may reference this book regularly, while another may set it aside in order to move on.

Regardless of the ways they are used, no dust settles on these archives. This book contains a powerful living collection of data, memory, and experience that is so relevant it trembles. You must pay very close attention to hear its call.

We made this book for listening. Please accept our invitation. We made this book for deployment. Please pass it along and invite someone else to listen.

Thank you,
Monica Haller

If you would like to purchase your own copy of this book please order online at lulu.com.

Go to veteransbookproject.com to share your thoughts and questions about this book, or to see other books from the compilation.

We have worked to credit the images in this book, as well as the texts that have influenced the authors here. Please contact the Veterans Book Project about any unintentionally omitted credits.

©2010 Veterans Book Project & Monica Haller



Philip Studer is the eldest of four siblings. His younger brother SSG Brian E. Studer, a soldier for nine years in the US Army, was killed August 22nd, 2008 in Ghazni, Afghanistan. He was attempting to disarm an Improvised Explosive Device in a roadside culvert. As the lead on this particular mission and as an expert Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technician, it was his job to remove these devices for the safety of fellow soldiers and civilians in the area. Brian, 28, was only months away from finishing his deployment to Afghanistan and less than four months from leaving the military to explore new directions. Philip survives his brother and lives in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota where he practices commercial interior design.

