

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT STEVEN D. CONOVER

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to honor and remember a young man from Wilmington, OH, a man who was taken from us far too soon, a young man who lost his life in service to our country in Iraq, a young man who stands as a shining example of bravery, courage, and who had a profound sense of faith.

Army SGT Steven Conover, a member of the 82nd Airborne Field Artillery, Charlie Battery, was killed on November 2, 2003, along with 16 other brave Americans. When the helicopter they were riding in was shot down near Fallujah, he was on his way home to Ohio, on his way home for a 2-week leave where he was going to surprise his childhood sweetheart, his wife Brooke, for their second wedding anniversary.

Steven was only 21 years of age. While the tragedy of his loss is undeniable, Steven's family and friends take comfort in remembering him as he was, as he always will be, frozen in time as an exuberant young man who tried very hard and succeeded in doing much good in the world.

Steven grew up in Wilmington, OH, and attended Wilmington High School, graduating in the year 2000. His friends remember him as laid back, shy, kind, and caring. He also attended the Laurel Observation Vocational School where he was a member of the Air Force Junior ROTC. One of his ROTC instructors, Howard Vosburgh, described Steven this way:

[Steven was a] very mature, genuinely nice guy [who] automatically, when he spoke, other people listened. His fellow students looked up to him. I admired him. He was just a cut above his peers. He was that kind of person.

Throughout his short life, Steven would gain the admiration of so many people. His hometown of Wilmington honored him with a story in the local paper about his service and the service of three of his relatives who were also serving in Iraq. Not only did several of Steven's relatives dedicate their lives and service to our country, but so did his wife Brooke. While Steven trained at Fort Sill, OK, Brooke enlisted in the Army because she knew how Steven loved his career and figured that they would both end up, as she said, "lifers."

Brooke remembered fondly how Steven would help ease her fears before she started basic training. The two would spend as much time together as they could, fishing and walking the trails at the base. However, Brooke suffered a leg muscle injury during basic training that resulted in her honorable discharge.

Steven was forced to leave his soulmate when his unit was sent to Iraq in April 2003. He always made an effort to write to his wife, as well as his mother and stepfather in Wilmington. Additionally, Steven remained in contact with students from

his alma mater. Wilmington High School created a trophy case that displayed the photos of 22 former students serving overseas in the military and students wrote letters to the soldiers, including Steven. This contact brought Steven great comfort as he dealt with the death of his best friend in combat, as well as the suffering he saw in Iraq.

Steven was a devout Christian. He used his faith as a guide during many difficult times while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. As Steven's stepfather, Michael, recalled:

They were ambushed quite often, and Steven just said he knew the hand of God was on him. He saw the hand of God in Iraq.

According to Pastor Elizabeth Looney, who knew Steven since his birth, his time in Iraq changed his beliefs and bolstered his faith. She said of Steven:

The pain and suffering he saw increased his resolve to do good and made him proud to serve his country.

Steven told her of his desire to return home and sit in the church with her. His faith was strong, and he had a profound sense that he was doing what was right—that it was, in fact, necessary.

Upon his death, at a memorial service at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, Steven and five of his fallen comrades were eulogized. The most poignant moment of the service was the final roll call. For those not familiar with the tradition, the Sergeant rises and calls the names of the soldiers present in the audience. Each responds with "here." A deafening silence is the only response to the call for the fallen soldier—the silence that reminds us all of the ultimate sacrifice they each have made.

I had the privilege of meeting Steven's family and friends at his funeral service in Wilmington. During the eulogy, Pastor Looney described him as "a hero . . . mischievous . . . everything he did was funny." Most profoundly, though, she described Steven as a watchman—a watchman who protects all of us—who watches over us. She concluded with these words:

We're going to miss his smile and his face and all the love he gave. I know where Steven is.

We all know where Steven is. His faith guided him through life and into his eternal resting place.

Left to cherish his memory are his wife Brooke; his mother Lorraine; stepfather Michael; brother Aaron; sisters Kaliegh and Corrie, as well as grandparents, nephews, nieces, aunts, and uncles.

I know they miss Steven deeply.

Steven Conover was an exceptional young man, who will never be forgotten.

ARMY SPECIALIST JAMES POWELL II

Mr. President, last October, at one of Saddam Hussein's palaces in Tikrit, Iraq, two fallen United States soldiers were honored by several hundred of their comrades. The mood was somber as troops, in full battle gear, stood in formation for the final roll call. When

the call came, Army SP James Powell II and SP Donald Wheeler did not respond.

With tears streaming down their faces, the troops paid their final respects to these two brave men. As Battalion Commander, LTC Steve Russell told the soldiers:

We will finish their mission. As long as Regulars draw breath, we shall not forget them.

We will not forget them either.

I come to the Senate Floor today to pay tribute to one of these men—fellow Ohioan, SP James Powell. James lost his life on October 12, 2003, when his Bradley Fighting Vehicle struck an anti-tank mine in Baji, Iraq. James was serving as a member of B Company, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division based out of Fort Hood, TX.

James grew up in Columbus. He graduated from Linden McKinley High School in 1996. Lifelong friend Adam Warrix remembers James as "outgoing and always looking to help someone out."

After graduation, James enlisted in the Navy and served from 1997 to 2000, as a seaman apprentice on the USS *Arctic*. Though he was proud of being in the Navy, James's enlistment provided him with much more than service to his country—it introduced him to his best friend and love of his life, Ruby Mann.

James became friends with Ruby's brother while the two men were serving in the Navy together. They went to Kentucky for a hunting trip in September 1998, and while there, James met Ruby for the first time. Ruby says it was love at first sight. She was so taken by James that she asked him out on a date the first night he was there. James joked that he would have asked her, but he was afraid she would say no because of the four inches she had on him.

The two went out and fell head over heels for each other. Six months later, James proposed. They married in October 2000. Ruby fondly remembers how much they loved doing the little things at their home in Radcliff, KY—sleeping in on the weekends, lying together on the couch, and drinking coffee in the morning.

James and Ruby considered the birth of their daughter, Lauren, as the greatest moment in their lives. James loved his daughter as much as any parent could. Ruby remembers how her husband used to sneak Lauren ice cream and their peek-a-boo matches on the couch.

James cried when Lauren told him "I love you" for the first time.

Determined to make a better life for his wife and daughter, James enlisted in the Army in January 2001. He loved nothing more than being with his family, but his enlistment took him away from them for extended periods of time. James dealt with the separation by throwing himself into his work.

He was sent with his unit to Iraq as part of the 4th Infantry Division; its

base of operations was in Tikrit. James knew the danger—especially of working in Saddam Hussein's hometown. But to James, it didn't matter; he had a job to do. He wanted to make the world a safer place for his wife and his daughter, and for all of us.

SP Tim Moore, who served with James in Iraq, remembered James telling him how much he missed his wife and daughter and how he also missed hunting and fishing. He remembers that James never complained. He did what he had to do.

Another comrade, Captain Matt Weber, recalled that James didn't just put on the uniform and go to work—he knew what it truly meant to be a soldier.

James was killed just 8 days after he received notice that he would be going home. He had called Ruby to tell her the news and how excited he was. James was looking forward to seeing his family and joining the Kentucky State Police.

Despite the news that he would be going home, Army superiors recalled that James still volunteered for a dangerous combat—the very mission that would ultimately take his life. Ruby said that even if James could have known what would happen, he still would have gone on that mission. That is the type of person he was. That is the kind of soldier he was. For his service and bravery, James was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, and the Combat Infantry Badge.

James Powell defined bravery, honor, and love of country. Indeed, he was a fine soldier. But more than that, he was a strong, loving, supportive father, husband, and son. I had the privilege of meeting James Powell's family at the memorial service held in his honor. I spoke to Debra Powell, James's mother, who told me how proud she was of her son—how much she loved him.

Our Nation lost a great soldier in SP James Powell. He is an American hero whose memory will forever be cherished in the hearts and minds of all those who were privileged to know him.

CORPORAL ANDREW D. SIMMONS

Mr. President, an ordnance facility at Al Asad Air Base in Iraq is now called Brownfield Station. The significance of this cannot be overstated nor should the meaning behind it be forgotten.

Members of the Marine Wing Support Group 374 renamed the building after one of their fallen comrades—fellow Ohioan Marine Corporal Andrew Simmons, who also went by the name of Andrew Brownfield. Andrew lost his life on March 18, 2004, while serving our Nation in Iraq. He was 24 years old.

Andrew was an ordnance man with the task of hanging bombs on planes and helicopters. Major Steve White, Marine casualty affairs officer in Akron, OH made a poignant statement regarding the new name for the ordnance facility. This is what he said:

[This] is a reminder to the Marines in Iraq and those preparing to go there that freedom

is not free. Marines never forget the sacrifices that were made by those who have gone before us.

I rise today to pay tribute to Andrew, whose life and sacrifice should remind all of us that freedom isn't free.

Andrew Simmons was born on October 13, 1979. Known for his quick wit and sense of humor, family members and friends fondly recall his proficiency at imitating famous movie characters. Among his favorites were Billy Bob Thornton's character in the movie *Slingblade*, Dustin Hoffman's character in *Rainman*, and Tom Hanks character in *Forrest Gump*. Andrew was always the one making everyone around him laugh.

Andrew also had a driving desire to succeed. He grew up in Akron, OH and attended North High School, where he was one of the first students to join a training program that allowed students to divide their time between school and studying a vocation. After graduating from high school in 1999, Andrew held a number of jobs but decided that what he really wanted was to join the military. He wanted to be Marine and was so proud to be one that after boot camp he persuaded three of his friends to join as well.

Andrew's mother Melody remembers how Andrew's attitude changed after he graduated from boot camp. She said that "he walked proud. He had the Marine look, even in civilian clothes."

Following the tragedy of the September 11 attacks, Andrew knew that he wanted to fight against terrorism. He volunteered to go to Iraq. His fiancée, Michell Hackworth, remembered him saying that he wanted a piece of the action—that he wanted to prevent any more terrorist attacks in the United States, and this was his way of doing the most he could.

On the day he left for Iraq, Andrew called his mother from California, where he was stationed. He left a message on her machine. In it, he perfectly imitated Tom Hanks in *Forrest Gump* saying, "I love you Jenny." Andrew also told his mother and fiancée that going to Iraq was something he had to do. He felt it was his duty.

Without question, Andrew was an exemplary Marine. His comrades knew they could trust him—they knew they could depend on him. Navy Lieutenant James A. Bradshaw, chaplain for the Marine Wing Support Squadron, had this to say:

[Andrew] took a personal interest in every Marine who worked with him and spent extra hours mentoring them and helping them earn their rank, as well as just helping them be more motivated.

Andrew and Michell had big plans for the future. Andrew used to say he wanted nine sons. He wanted to relocate to Northeast Ohio. He wanted to become an electrician, or a law enforcement officer. Tragically, those dreams will not be realized.

Since the beginning of the war in Iraq, Ohioans have given their support to families and friends of fallen sol-

diers. They have continually come together to make sure that families know they are not alone in their grief.

More than 2,000 people lined the funeral route in Akron to show their support for Andrew's family. In a moving display, people dressed in red, white, and blue. Some carried flags. Others held signs reading, "Thank you for our freedom." Many could not stop the tears and still others waited for over an hour to pay their respects.

With their hands over their hearts, mourners silently followed the procession to Andrew's final resting place.

Veterans could be seen wearing their uniforms and medals. Tom Bulanda, a Vietnam veteran, stood at the gate of the cemetery with his chest covered in the medals he had earned. He came to honor a fellow Marine—a Marine he considers to be one of his own.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Andrew—a debt we can never fully repay. Today, we honor his memory and remember his life.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.
THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

HURRICANE IVAN

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I want to share a few thoughts at this time with the Senate concerning the damages we received from the hurricane, "Ivan the Terrible."

It was a major hurricane. It did tremendous damage to properties and houses, timber, and agricultural crops throughout the State of Alabama and even into our region of the United States.

I had the pleasure yesterday to travel with President Bush as he went down to Orange Beach, AL, and the Gulf Shores areas, and we examined the losses that occurred there. They are quite significant. I had flown over the area earlier, and it already looked a little better to me yesterday than it did before. The tides are still high. The water level in the Gulf of Mexico remained higher than for the highest tide for maybe 24 hours after this storm hit because the hurricane had pushed so much water in. The water went over the beachfront areas into the lagoons and flooded houses on the lagoons. It blew homes down. Some well-constructed homes stood up well. Most of the condominiums that are multistory condominiums seemed to hold up well, but the net effect was a major loss for many people. The homes and buildings will have to be structurally examined—all of them—to make sure there is not some structural damage that is not anticipated today. I am proud of the people there.

The numbers I have received indicate there were 70 deaths in the Caribbean as a result of Hurricane Ivan and that, according to the Associated Press, there were 52 deaths in the United States. We had four deaths in Alabama. That is a very large loss of life. It is something we need to think about, to