

JOSHUA SCHMIT



Joshua Andrew Schmit was born and raised in Willmar Minnesota. He attended Willmar schools and graduated in 1999. On 25 September 1998 Josh decided to follow in his father Greg's footsteps and enlisted in the Minnesota Army National Guard. Josh completed One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning Georgia as an Infantryman. At his "Turning Blue" ceremony, when Josh received his blue infantry cord, he chose to have his father Greg pin the cord on. Greg had already gone through the ceremony when he had gone through Infantry training early in his military career.

When Josh returned to Minnesota, he became a member of Company C, 1/194th Infantry in Sauk Centre Minnesota.

After drilling with the unit for a while, Josh decided that he wanted to do something more. He was discharged from the National Guard on 11 May 2000 when Josh decided to join the Regular Army, enlisting on 12 May 2000. To transfer to Regular Army from the Guard, Josh had to be discharged first, then he could officially enlist in the Regular Army.



Greg, Jessica, Josh, & Kim Schmit (L-R) at Fort Benning Georgia after Josh's graduation from AIT in the fall of 1999. Note the blue cord from his "Turning Blue" ceremony.

Schmit was sent to Hoehenfehls Germany where he served in the Scout Platoon, Charlie Company, 1/4 Infantry, 7th Army, posing as the Opposition Force in war games and training exercises.

During his time in Germany, Josh did a lot of Infantry training. He spent time in the field, doing the war game exercises and time on the firing range. He also took the tests and qualified for the German Marksmanship Award or "Schutzenschnur". For this award, he needed to learn to handle German weapons, and qualify on the range with them.



Joshua Schmit in his OPFOR (Opposition Force) uniform while in Germany.

Josh training in Germany, 2000



Josh in Germany - 2001

During his service in the Army OPFOR group, Josh was issued distinctive uniforms to wear while in the field. At times, he would wear black uniforms, or Tiger Stripe Camouflage uniforms to distinguish himself as one of the "bad guys" while in the field during the war game exercises.



Joshua Schmit and his newlywed wife Andrea at their wedding, 26 September 2005.

While in Germany he met Andrea Catel De Pirates Soares, a Brazilian national attending college in Germany. She was working for the Army under the COB (Civilian on Base) program. Her job was to help pose as rioters and the like to help soldiers with their training.

Josh was discharged from the Army in May 2004, as a Specialist 4. After arriving home to Willmar, he realized that he was in love and returned to Germany. Josh was a member of the Army's Inactive Ready Reserve.



The couple planned to be married, and a wedding date was set for 26 September 2005. The ceremony would take place in Bov Denmark. Josh's parents came from Minnesota for the wedding.

Shortly before their marriage, Josh was informed he would be recalled back into the Army. At the time Josh was going to school in Germany, planning to pursue a dream of culinary arts. He was officially recalled in January 2006.

Although out of the US, and newly married, Josh did his duty by reporting for recall. After just a few months together with Andrea as a married couple, Josh received orders for Iraq. He was assigned to the 3rd Platoon, 1451st Transportation Company, a Boone North Carolina National Guard unit. Their mission was Combat Logistics and Patrol. They were deployed in February 2006 for a tour of duty in Iraq. Before leaving the US, Josh received some training, physicals, shots, and the military tradition of waiting. During some of the down time, Josh spent time coming back home to Minnesota to see family and friends.



Spelling it out...1451. Josh is making the "5" location

Left, at the Buca di Peppo Italian Restuarant in Minnesota, before leaving for Iraq. April 2006



Josh's family from left: father Greg, mother Kim, niece Amelia, Josh, wife Andrea, and sister Jessica.

Below, meal time in a different place, not italian cuisine, under much different conditions.

For Josh, the waiting around for the deployment is what bothered him. He just wanted to serve his time, and make good on the commitment he had so he could get back home to his wife and family. He almost couldn't wait to go, just so he could get back and move on.

They trained and prepared for their deployment. Trying to train all of these men for the task that was before them. Trying to make them capable soldiers in a Transportation Company.





One item that Josh had to do, along with all the other men of the unit, was to have their photo taken. The idea of having his photo taken didn't bother Josh, until he found out what it was for; mortuary affairs. Josh, and the other men of the unit, didn't like or want to think about that, and hated the photo. It is a photo that shows Josh, not in his usual happy demeanor.



US Army Mortuary Affairs photo of Brandon Wallace, Josh's gunner.

The Army photo that Josh disliked, and didn't want to take.



Shortly after his recall, Josh was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, E-5.

Whether in Iraq, or still in Boone North Carolina, Josh and the other men preferred to take photos in a more impromptu manner, as shown in this photo.

Throughout it all, the men tried to have a good outlook on their situation. Many of the men in Third Platoon were recalled Inactive Ready Reservist. They hoped that their time in the Army was over after their discharge.



Josh at Camp Adder in Tellil Iraq, 2007

The unit had enough numbers to fill most of the slots for deployment except for Third Platoon. Josh and a number of others were brought in to fill these vacancies. All of the members brought in had to be retrained toward accomplishing the tasks at hand. Josh's background was Infantry, but others in the platoon were cooks, truck drivers, and medics.

The unit experienced growing pains at first. Josh was quoted in a National Guard publication as saying "We are doing kind of an (infantry)

mission, and a lot of the guys initially had no clue about the weapons systems. It started off really, really slow and we're still working on it, but we're getting there and everybody's clicking together and learning the job."



Josh's job was to command a Humvee while on the patrols in Iraq for Hurricane 33. The company was based out of Camp Adder Iraq. Josh experienced combat time and time again while in Iraq. His Humvee was hit three times by IED's (improvised explosive devices) during his tour of duty.



Members of third platoon, 1451st Transportation Company convoy logistic patrol team at the motor pool. Josh is standing on the front right of the photo.

Josh with his Humvee that took three IED attacks.



Josh's tastes of combat left him a little uneasy at times but with the help of his father Greg half a world away, they tried to talk their way through it. Greg, a Supply Sergeant in the National Guard was preparing to deploy himself shortly after Josh came home.



While in Iraq, Josh became friends with a number of the men in his unit. The gunner on Josh's Humvee, Jackie Blaylock, became a close friend of Josh's. After the three IED attacks however, Jackie was taken off the Humvee to recover.

During their down time, the men of the 1451st transportation company tried to have some fun and let loose a bit. They played games, and practical jokes on one another. Anything to try to ease the tension of being in a war zone.



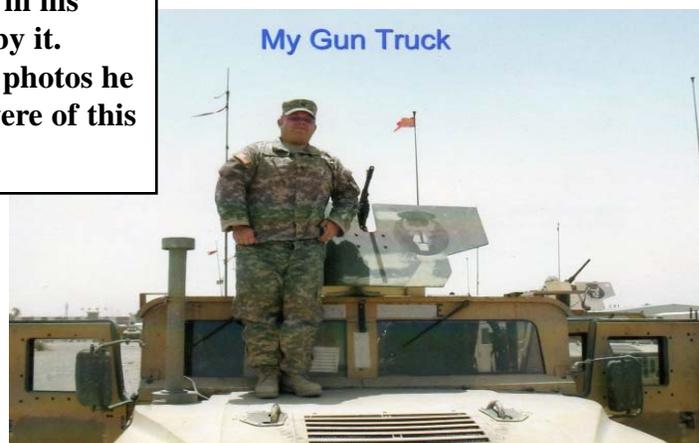
Josh and Jackie Blaylock, "Forever Brothers"



Josh spent much of his time in Iraq in his Humvee or by it. many of the photos he sent home were of this vehicle.



Showing Off



My Gun Truck



Sergeant Joshua Schmit in Iraq - 2007



During Josh's time in Iraq, Josh found that he loved the Iraqi children. He always had a soft spot for kids, and felt a special connection to the children he met in Iraq.



Nearing the end of his deployment, the war reared its ugly head at Josh, one last time. On Saturday 14 April 2007, Josh made the supreme sacrifice. He was commanding his humvee like normal around Fallujah Iraq. His friend and Gunner Brandon Wallace, also a recalled IRR from Missouri was with him. A roadside bomb detonated near their vehicle around 2:30 am (Friday afternoon in the US). Josh and Brandon were driving in the lead on a four lane highway. According to members of the platoon, Josh and Brandon must have noticed something that got their attention and radioed, "Hurricane 33 crossing over" before they changed into the closed oncoming traffic lane. They had not gone far before the other members heard on the radio "Oh s--t" over the radio from Josh and Brandon. Seconds later, the bomb went off.

Josh and Brandon were seriously injured. Other members of their platoon rushed to help the injured men, but to no avail. Reports stated Josh died on the way to a triage center to treat his wounds. Fellow soldiers from the platoon stated that Josh and Brandon were killed instantly in the blast. Josh was 26 years old. He had only 10 days left in his tour of duty in Iraq. He was planning to come home for his homecoming and a going away party for his father.

According to Greg Schmit, the Iraqis placed a “Road Bump” bomb in the road. They had poured diesel fuel over the asphalt and in the heat of the desert sun, this softened the tar. They peeled back the asphalt and under it placed about 30 pounds of explosives along with incendiary explosives. They then laid the asphalt over the explosive and rigged it with a pressure sensitive firing device. When the vehicle passed over the spot the explosives went off and were followed immediately by the incendiary.

Josh’s wife was notified while she was living in Munich Germany. Josh’s mother, Kimberly was notified by Andrea around 12:30 pm on Saturday the 14th in Willmar. The news caught the family off-guard. An Army notification officer had been to the home early in the day to try to notify Kim, but was unable to. They then went to the Willmar Armory to notify Greg who was at Annual Training. Greg was at Camp Ripley near Little Falls Minnesota preparing for his deployment when he received the news from the notification officer. Greg returned home that afternoon. Josh’s wife Andrea planned to fly in as soon as possible to be with the family.

On 18 April 2007, 1451st Transportation company held a memorial service in honor of their two fallen brothers in arms. One of the two men’s friends played Brandon’s black acoustic guitar and tried to hold back tears as he sang a song in tribute to them. Then tributes were done by fellow soldiers about the two men. The tribute to Josh is noted in a National Guard publication: “Sgt. Nickolas Haskell followed with a tribute to Schmit, chuckling as he described his friend’s tenacity and short stature - “five-feet-nothing, kevlar and boots included” -which led to his radio call sign of “Angry Dwarf” But as you all know, size didn’t matter to Josh...because I believe Josh could move mountains if he wanted,” said Haskell. “And talking to him, I know he could move a mountain for what he loved: his wife, his family and his friends.””

Josh’s father Greg Schmit asked to be Josh’s Military Escort back to Willmar. Greg brought his son home from Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on April 23rd. The family brought Josh up to his home on Horseshoe Drive one last time during the procession from the Willmar Airport to Harvey Anderson Funeral Home. Hundreds of community citizens lined the streets to welcome Josh home during the procession.

Josh’s funeral was held on Wednesday 25 April 2007 at the Willmar Civic Center. Members of Greg’s unit, the 682nd Engineer Battalion served as casketbearers and did the military honors. Interment was at Fairview Cemetery in Willmar.



West Central Tribune Photo



Star Tribune Photo

Josh was awarded six awards posthumously: the Bronze Star medal, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Medal and the Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" device. During his career in the Army Josh had also earned: the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Good Conduct medal, National Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, and Overseas Service Ribbon. For the previous attacks on his humvee in Iraq Josh was also awarded the Combat Action Badge.



Brandon Wallace, Josh's friend and Gunner in his Humvee, who was killed on 14 April 2007 in the same attack that killed Josh. Brandon was 27 years old.

To his friends and family Josh was known as "Umpa" due to his short stocky stature. But even with the small body, they all say that he had a bigger than body, soft heart. He was #13 in High School Hockey and played football. Josh enjoyed hunting and fishing with his dad and friends.

He is survived by his wife Andrea, parents Greg & Kim Schmit, sister Jessica, niece Amelia, and other family and friends.

In early May 2007, eight men from Josh's unit drove non-stop from Indiana to come and visit Josh's family in Willmar. They spent two days with the family laughing, telling stories, and remembering "Umpa". They showed the bond of brothers in arms, they showed they were a Band of Brothers.

In October 2008, Josh's parents, wife, sister and grandmother traveled to Boone North Carolina for a memorial dedication for Josh and Brandon. Josh's first gunner, Jackie Blaylock died on 9 December 2007 grieving for his friends, he and others were also remembered. The war has taken its toll on the 1451st, and continued to, even after the men returned home.

When Greg returned home from escorting his son back to Willmar he received news that he would not be going to Iraq. He was to stay home and take care of his family. Even through it all Greg still planned to go to Iraq and serve his country, and do his mission.

The 1451st Transportation Company returned to the United States and celebrated a homecoming in May 2007. They honored their fallen comrades by leaving their seats open with roses in their place.





Sergeant Josh Schmit, with fellow soldiers Sergeant Clinton Gill (left) & Sergeant Brandon Wallace.

Iraq, as seen through the eyes of Joshua Schmit





Josh's Class B Dress Uniform (#450) donated by his parents, Kim & Greg, 26 September 2007. All awards are on the uniform including Posthumous Awards. Below is Josh's Cold Weather Winter Parka (#451).



Josh's Army Beret with his units Distinctive Insignia - Donated 26 September 2007.



Josh's BDU Cap - Donated 26 September 2007



M-65 Woodland Camouflage Field Jacket (#439) worn by Joshua Schmit. Donated 26 September 2007 by his parents Greg & Kim Schmit.



Josh's Black Opposition Force (OPFOR) Field Uniform (#449). Donated 26 September 2007 by his Parents Greg & Kim Schmit.



Josh's Black Opposition Force (OPFOR) Gortex Parka (#442). Donated 26 September 2007 by his Parents Greg & Kim Schmit.



Josh's Black OPFOR Coveralls (#443) and OD Standard Issue coveralls (#438). While in Germany serving as OPFOR, Josh wore a variety of different uniforms to stand out from other soldiers that were not OPFOR. Donated 26 September 2007.





Josh's Black All Weather Overcoat (#448) worn with the dress uniforms and his Army Garrison Cap. The Garrison Cap was discontinued after the introduction of the Beret. Donated 26 September 2007.



Display from Veteran's Day 2007 of Josh's Items. Area dedicated to him.



Josh's US Army 5-Button Sweater (#441) worn with field uniforms for extra warmth. Donated 26 September 2007.



Joshua Schmit's Class A dress Uniform donated 26 September 2007 by his parents Kim & Greg.

Top Photo:

On the right side of his uniform Josh wears the blue infantry braid under the epaulet. On the pocket is his name badge, with the Presidential Unit Citation above. Above the Unit Citation is the Distinctive Unit Insignia.

The silver braid going across the right front of his uniform is the German Armed Forces Marksmanship Badge or "Schutzenschnur". This award is authorized for enlisted personnel to wear if they qualify. There are three degrees, Expert - Gold, Sharpshooter - Silver, and Marksman - Bronze, depending on how well they qualified. Josh was awarded the Silver Sharpshooter Qualification.

Bottom Photo:

On the collars or lapels of the uniform Josh wore the "U.S." and Infantry crossed rifles devices with the distinctive blue infantry backers.

Over the left pocket is, at top, the Combat Action Badge. His ribbons are from left to right, top to bottom: (Row 1) Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, (Row 2) Army Commendation, Army Achievement, Good Conduct, (Row 3) Iraqi Campaign, Global War on Terror Service, National Defense Service, (Row 4) Armed Forces Reserve with "M" device, Army Overseas Service, and Army Service ribbon.

On the pocket, from left to right are: Expert Qualification badge for the Machine Gun, Rifle & Pistol, Marksman Qualification Badge for Grenade, and the Driver Badge for Wheeled and Track Vehicles.

For formal occasions, enlisted personnel are authorized to wear a commercial made plain white shirt with a bow tie, rather than the Army Green 415 shirt with four-in-hand tie.

