

In Honor of Connecticut's Servicemen and Servicewomen

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

—The Declaration of Independence

Life. Liberty. Equality. The pursuit of happiness. These are essential rights and values cherished by Americans from the very founding of our nation. These essential rights and values have been defended by our nation's military for more than two centuries. And for more than two centuries, Connecticut troops have served in our nation's military with bravery and distinction.

Today, once again, servicemen and women from Connecticut have answered the call to defend us with courage and dedication as members of the United States Armed Forces. These men and women, our fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, relatives, friends and neighbors, whether protecting our borders at home or our country's interests in lands far away, provide critical military support to our state and nation during peacetime and war.

Men and women from Connecticut serve in each of the country's five military branches: The United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard. They also serve in the seven Reserve components of the military: The Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Naval Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve. Traditionally known as part-time servicemen and women, National Guard and Reserve members have increasingly been called to serve full-time since the events of September 11, 2001, often being deployed overseas for greatly extended tours of duty.

For their courage, sacrifices, and dedication to our state and country, Connecticut men and women serving in the Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, and in the Connecticut Military Department, deserve, and have, our heartfelt thanks and honor. The brief information presented for each of the services on the following pages provides only a limited introduction to their importance to our nation's history and defense.

When we honor those who serve, we especially remember those who have selflessly sacrificed their lives protecting our freedom. Just as families join together to comfort one another during difficult times, when Connecticut servicemen and women are lost in defense of our country, we unite as a family of citizens connected by caring and concern to mourn and offer support to their loved ones.

In special remembrance of the service members from Connecticut who have made the ultimate sacrifice since September 11, 2001, we honor them individually in the pages that follow. Although this tribute can never reflect the tremendous sacrifice made by each of these men and women, as well as their families, we pray that it will cause those who read

these pages, and use this book, to think often—with deep appreciation—of the Connecticut servicemen and women who have served, and continue to serve, our great state and nation.

It is with pride, admiration, and profound gratitude that we dedicate this 2004 edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual to all of Connecticut's servicemen and servicewomen.

Susan Bysiewicz

Susan Bysiewicz
Secretary of the State



Photographs courtesy of the following (clockwise from top left): U.S. Army, by Pfc. Hugo A. Baray-Vasquez; U.S. Marine Corps, by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte; U.S. Air Force, by Staff Sgt. Chris Stagner; U.S. Coast Guard, by PA1 Veronica Bandrowsky; U.S. Navy, by PH1 Brien Aho.

The United States Military

THE FIVE ARMED SERVICES

U.S. Army

Over 225 years, one can truly say of the United States Army: "When it was needed, it was there."

Since its birth on June 14, 1775—over a year before the Declaration of Independence—the Army has played a vital role in the growth and development of the American nation. It won America's independence in an arduous eight-year struggle against Great Britain. During the Civil War it preserved the Union through four years of bitter conflict that turned brother against brother. The United States Army has repeatedly defended the country against external threats, from the "second war of independence" with Great Britain in 1812, through the twentieth-century struggles that finally rid the world of the specters of Nazi totalitarianism, Japanese imperialism, and world communism.



The most powerful ground force in the world with over 494,000 active duty soldiers, today's U.S. Army operates in more than 50 countries in support of American domestic and foreign policy.

Courtesy of: "Centuries of Service, The U.S. Army, 1775-2004," U.S. Army Center of Military History. Additional sources: U.S. Army; U.S. Department of Defense. Department of the Army emblem used with permission of the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry. Further reproduction is prohibited.

U.S. Marine Corps



Created by the Continental Congress on November 10, 1775, the Marines have been vital to the nation's defensive capabilities. Whether serving in the air, on land or at sea, the Marine tradition of constant preparedness and "First to Fight" mentality exemplifies their commitment to the Corps and Country. "Semper Fidelis" or "Always Faithful" is the motto of the Corps.

Through such famous battles as Tripoli, Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, Chosin Reservoir and the Persian Gulf, the Marines have demonstrated their skill and dedication as our nation's protectors. Today's Marines have learned to adapt to any scenario from jungle to urban settings in order to combat terrorism. With only 178,000 Marines, the Corps' impact is much greater than just its size would indicate.

Source: U.S. Marine Corps. Photograph of U.S. Marine Corps Memorial courtesy of U.S. National War College Online Military Image Collection.

U.S. Navy

The U.S. Navy was established by the Continental Congress on October 13, 1775, almost a year before America declared its independence. A small force in comparison to the British Royal Navy, the Continental Navy's contributions to the Revolutionary War effort exceeded its small size.



Disbanded after the war, the Navy was reborn on April 30, 1798. It has been an indispensable component of our nation's defenses ever since. Perhaps World War II best demonstrated the Navy's importance, when the Navy-Marine Corps team's victories in the Pacific stopped the spread of Japanese imperialism; and the Navy's destruction of Nazi U-boats in the Atlantic ensured safe passage of men and materiel critical to victory in Europe.

With over 374,000 active duty personnel, 290 ships, and more than 4,000 aircraft, today's U.S. Navy is the world's largest. It stands well equipped to realize its self-stated mission to "maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas."

Connecticut is honored to host Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, the Navy's first submarine base; and USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear powered submarine, built in Connecticut and launched in 1954. The Nautilus is a National Historic Landmark and Connecticut's official State Ship.

Sources: U.S. Naval Historical Center; U.S. Navy. Photograph of USS Arleigh Burke courtesy of U.S. Naval Media Center, All Hands Magazine Online Image Gallery, December 2001.

U.S. Air Force



From its modest beginnings as part of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, the United States Air Force (USAF) grew to over 500,000 servicemen and servicewomen. Because of the proven importance of air support within the other armed services in national defense, the USAF was granted independent existence by act of Congress in 1947. The USAF was both a critical deterrent of the Cold War and vital in active operations in the Korean Conflict, Vietnam and the Gulf War.

In recent years, the importance of air support has not diminished, but the size of the USAF has been scaled down to 359,300 due to advances in technology. Even with the smaller size, the effectiveness and dominance of the Air Force has increased.

New aircraft such as the Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle fit into the future vision of the USAF of "Global Vigilance, Reach and Power."

Source: U.S. Air Force. Photograph of U.S. Air Force Thunderbird courtesy of Minot Air Force Base Online Image Library.

U.S. Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard, designated by Congress as one of the country's five armed services, traces its origin to 1790, when a fleet of ten cutters—a type of lightly armed ship—was commissioned to curtail smuggling and enforce the new nation's trade and tariff laws. In the decades that followed, the "Revenue Cutter Service" was assigned an ever-expanding set of responsibilities, evolving into what we know today as the U.S. Coast Guard.



Our nation's oldest continuously operating maritime service, today's Coast Guard has 39,000 active duty personnel. It patrols over 95,000 miles of coastline, more than 360 ports, more than 10,000 miles of inland waterways, and 3.4 million square miles of ocean.

Though best known for its peacetime work, such as life-saving search and rescue missions, maintaining aids to navigation, responding to environmental disasters at sea, providing port security, and enforcing the country's marine fishing and maritime laws, the Coast Guard has also served with honor in each of the nation's wars, including the current military engagement in Iraq.

As a coastal state, Connecticut is privileged to have two Coast Guard Stations, one in New London, and one in New Haven. Our state is also honored to host the Coast Guard Academy, one of the nation's five service academies.

Sources: U.S. Coast Guard; Office of the U.S. Coast Guard Historian; U.S. Department of Defense. U.S. Coast Guard Emblem used with permission of the U.S. Coast Guard. Further reproduction is prohibited.

THE SEVEN RESERVE COMPONENTS

Army National Guard of the United States

The Army National Guard of the United States, the oldest component of the U.S. Armed Forces, predates the founding of the nation, tracing its roots to the first formal muster of colonial militia in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636. The Guard's citizen-soldiers have served in each of our nation's wars, and continue to be an absolutely vital component of today's U.S. Army, providing more than half its combat personnel.

The 350,000 men and women of the Army National Guard are members of a unique state and federal service. In times of peace, they act as "state troops," reporting to their respective state governors, and can be called to duty during natural disasters, civil unrest, and other state emergencies. During times of war or national emergency, the President can order the Army National Guard to federal service.

Connecticut Army National Guard

The Connecticut branch of the Army National Guard of the United States is more than 360 years old, and is headquartered at the State Armory in Hartford. The largest component of the Connecticut Military Department, the Connecticut Army National Guard maintains 33 armories and is located in 23 communities statewide.

Since September 11, 2001, multiple Connecticut Army National Guard units have been mobilized and deployed to federal and state service both overseas and at home. Guard members have served, and continue to serve, in support of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. At home, Guard members have been mobilized and deployed to provide security for Connecticut's airports, nuclear power plants, and other critical infrastructure, such as railway stations and bridges. They have also been called to provide homeland security service at military installations throughout the Northeastern United States.

Sources: U.S. National Guard Bureau; U.S. Army National Guard; Connecticut Army National Guard; 2002-2003 Digest of Administrative Reports to the Governor of Connecticut.

Army Reserve

Established in 1908, the Army Reserve is the part-time service component of the U.S. Army. Army Reserve soldiers combine private-sector skills with military training to support the Army's worldwide missions.

In fact, the Army Reserve provides one hundred percent of the Army's chemical brigades, internment brigades, Judge Advocate General units, medical groups, railway units, water supply battalions, and training and exercise divisions. Additionally, the Reserve provides the majority of the Army's civil and public affairs units, psychological operations units, transportation groups, hospitals, and motor battalions.

Composed of three groups of soldiers, the Selected Reserve—the most readily mobilized group—the Individual Ready Reserve, and the Retired Reserve, the entire Army Reserve force numbers more than one million. Army Reservists have served in each of the nation's conflicts from World War I through Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. Since September 11, 2001, Army Reserve soldiers have also been deployed throughout the United States in support of homeland security operations.

Source: U.S. Army Reserve

Marine Corps Reserve

Trained at the same highly skilled level as their full time brethren, the Marine Corps Reserves stand ever ready to supplement the needs of the Marine Corps. Connecticut is fortunate to have several units stationed within its borders: the Company C, 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, 4th Marine Division; Detachment 6, Headquarters and Service Company, 6th Motor Transport Battalion, 4th FSSG; and Detachment 1, Direct Support Motor Transport Company A, 6th Motor Transport Battalion, 4th FSSG.

Sources: U.S. Marine Corps; U.S. Marine Forces Reserve

Naval Reserve

The Naval Reserve Force, consisting of 150,000 men and women in the Selected and Individual Ready Reserves, is the part-time service component of the U.S. Navy; it traces its origins to the "Federal Naval Reserve," and the "Naval Reserve Flying Corps," created by Congress in 1915 and

1916, respectively. Since then, Naval Reservists have served in each of the nation's conflicts from World War I through Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The almost 88,000 members of the Selected Reserve are "force multipliers" comprising 19% of the Navy's military personnel strength. They provide a pool of trained individuals ready for immediate mobilization to augment the Navy at sea, in the air, and on land; not only in times of war and national emergency, but also, since the events of September 11, 2001, in day-to-day operations. Commissioned units of the Naval Reserve have their own equipment—such as ships and aircraft—in addition to personnel, and can be mobilized and deployed as self-contained units in support of Navy missions worldwide.

Sources: U.S. Naval Reserve; "The Naval Reservist," January 2004 issue.

Air National Guard of the United States

A unique section of the Reserves, the Air National Guard serves both Federal and State needs. Under the command of either the United States President or the Governor of a particular state, the Air National Guard will either supplement the requirements of the Air Force or fill the emergency needs of a state.

Connecticut Air National Guard

The Connecticut branch of the Air National Guard, the 103rd Fighter Wing, is also known as the "Flying Yankees." Stationed at Bradley Air National Base, the 103rd Fighter Wing has flown their A-10's in combat theatres such as Iraq and Bosnia. Located in Orange is the 103rd Air Control Squadron, which manages the airspace over designated areas.

Sources: U.S. Air Force; Connecticut Air National Guard

Air Force Reserve

With a total of 75,800 reservists standing ready, the Air Force Reserve Command serves to supplement the needs of the Air Force on short notice. This constant state of preparedness requires continuous levels of commitment by many people who could be our friends, coworkers or neighbors. On top of the combat readiness, the reservists also stand ready to provide humanitarian aid, fight forest fires, and administer medical aid.

Source: U.S. Air Force Reserve

Coast Guard Reserve

The military reserve component of the U.S. Coast Guard, the Coast Guard Reserve, was established in 1941. The Reserve's 8,000 members provide trained personnel available for active duty in time of war and national security emergency, as well as for response to natural and manmade disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, and ocean oil spills.

Since September 11, 2001, Coast Guard Reservists have regularly been called upon to augment the Coast Guard in administrative and operational activities. In particular, reservists provide most staff

members for Coast Guard Port Security Units (PSUs), which provide protection for shipping and port facilities both inside the United States, and overseas when needed. PSUs have served both in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, and more recently, in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sources: U.S. Coast Guard; U.S. Coast Guard Reserve

The Connecticut Military Department

Headquartered at the Hartford State Armory, the Connecticut Military Department coordinates the federal, state and local efforts of the Connecticut Army and Air National Guards, Office of Emergency Management and the Organized Militia.

The Militia includes the First Company Governor's Foot Guard, the Second Company Governor's Foot Guard, the First Company Governor's Horse Guard and the Second Company Governor's Horse Guard.

With facilities throughout the state from Avon to Westbrook, the Connecticut Military Department provides safety, law enforcement, and disaster relief for Connecticut and its inhabitants. Over 5000 servicemen and servicewomen are employed by the Military Department providing round the clock vigilance.

Sources: State of Connecticut Military Department; Connecticut General Statutes



The American Forces Information Service, U.S. Department of Defense

*Armed Forces Day is observed annually,
on the third Saturday in May.*

In Memory of

John A. Chapman

Phillip A. Jordan

Kemaphoom Ahn Chanawongse

Wilfredo Perez, Jr.

Richard Selden Eaton, Jr.

David Travis Friedrich

Anthony D'Agostino

Phillip R. Albert

Jeffrey Braun

Eric Thomas Paliwoda

Benjamin Gilman

Tyanna Avery-Felder

Felix Delgreco

Nathan B. Bruckenthal

Melissa Hobart

Jacob D. Martir

*Servicemen and women from Connecticut lost in
Afghanistan and Iraq,
March 2002 – September 2004*



Air Force Technical Sergeant John A. Chapman

Tech. Sgt. John A. Chapman was killed in action in Afghanistan March 4, 2002. He died of injuries from a helicopter crash. He was the first Connecticut native to die in combat since military action in Afghanistan following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

He had followed his father's footsteps into the Air Force in 1985 and initially worked with computers. But in 1989, Chapman decided to plunge into the grueling training for Special Forces. He was among the seven servicemen in his class of about 1,500 who made it through that training, his mother said. He joined the elite 24th Special Tactics Squadron based at Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina. The job sent him to hot spots all over the world. Chapman was part of a unit assigned to capture or set up airfields. His job was to set up air traffic control systems and guide bombers to their targets in support of ground troops. Chapman was on an MH-47 Chinook helicopter when it came under machine gun and rocket-propelled grenade fire.

A standout athlete and a 1983 graduate of Windsor Locks High School, Chapman leaves a wife and two young daughters who live in Fayetteville, N.C.

Chapman also is survived by his father, Eugene Chapman of Michigan, his stepfather, Nick Giaccone, two sisters and a brother. At Windsor Locks High, Chapman fast emerged as a winning athlete, making the varsity soccer team in his freshman year. A school diving record he set as a junior still stands.

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Marine Gunnery Sergeant Phillip A. Jordan

Gunnery Sergeant Phillip Jordan was born in Texas on April 20, 1960 and graduated from Clear Creek High School in League City, Texas.

He joined the United States Marine Corps in 1987 and served in the 1991 Gulf War. Based out of Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, Gunnery Sergeant Jordan was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, and 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

Gunnery Sergeant Jordan, 42, was killed on March 23, 2003 along with eight other Marines in a clash near the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah when enemy soldiers feigned surrender before opening fire.

A resident of Enfield, CT Gunnery Sergeant Jordan leaves behind his wife of nine years, Amanda and their six-year-old son Tyler.

Photograph and text courtesy of the Jordan Family.



Marine Corporal Kemaphoom Ahn Chanawongse

Corporal Kemaphoom "Ahn" Chanawongse was born in Bangkok, Thailand on May 5, 1980 and settled in Waterford, CT with his family, when he was nine. He graduated from Waterford High School in 1999 and immediately enlisted in the Marine Corps.

Based out of Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, Corporal Chanawongse was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, and 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade. His parent command was the 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion.

Corporal Chanawongse was first reported as missing in action after his amphibious assault vehicle was ambushed near Nasiriyah as the unit tried to take control of a bridge over the Euphrates River. On April 16, 2003 the Department of Defense confirmed that he had been killed in action on March 23, 2003 during that operation.

Corporal Chanawongse leaves behind his mother and stepfather Tan and Paul Patchem and a brother Kemapasse.

Photograph and text courtesy of the Chanawongse Family.



Army Specialist Wilfredo Perez, Jr.

Army Spc. Wilfredo Perez, Jr., 24, of Norwalk, CT, was born in Brooklyn, NY on December 19, 1978 to Wilfredo Perez, Sr. of Norwalk and Ann Marie Eccles of Queens. He lived in Queens until middle school, was a member of the Sea Cadets and was proud to have marched in the 1991 Desert Storm ticker tape parade in New York City.

Wilfredo moved to Connecticut to live with his father. He attended Nathan Hale Middle School and Norwalk High School and was a member of the R.O.T.C. program and a peer counselor, helping kids work out disputes. He walked numerous years for the MS Society and the American Diabetes Foundation. He volunteered at the 1995 Special Olympics World Games.

Army Spc. Perez was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, Ft. Hood, Texas. Army Spc. Perez and two other soldiers were killed on July 26, 2003 during a grenade attack in Iraq as they were guarding a children's hospital in Ba'Qubah, just north of Baghdad. He was the third Connecticut serviceman to die in Iraq and the first soldier from Norwalk killed in war since 1969.

Before shipping out to Ft. Hood, Wilfredo Perez, Jr. worked with his father as a remolding contractor. He also worked for Stew Leonard's and Sign-A-Rama in Norwalk. He loved designing signs freehand and with software. He hoped to use this experience and the GI bill to pursue a career in computer graphic design.

Wilfredo Perez, Jr. was a leader. Strong physically and mentally; handsome and charismatic. You liked him immediately. He was kind-hearted and loved his family—he would do anything for them. He had a beautiful smile and loved to make people laugh. And even if you knew him only briefly, you would never forget him.

Army Spc. Wilfredo Perez, Jr. was awarded the Army's Commendation Medal for meritorious service while assigned as the Personal Security Detachment for the Brigade Commander, the Purple Heart for wounds received in action, and the Bronze Star for the ultimate sacrifice for his country.

Army Spc. Wilfredo Perez, Jr.'s final resting place is Cypress Hills Cemetery, Queens, NY. To honor our fallen hero, a scholarship has been established in his name at Norwalk High School.

Photograph and text courtesy of the Perez Family.



Army Staff Sergeant Richard Selden Eaton, Jr.

Staff Sgt. Rick Eaton was New Haven-born and raised in Guilford, CT. While still a youth, he decided on an Army career and, especially, in Military Intelligence (MI). Never wanting to be anything more or less than a Counterintelligence Special Agent and Analyst, the descendant of two Generals turned down an appointment to West Point.

He was called to duty in the Iraq war with the Fort Meade, Maryland-based 323rd MI Battalion. He was attached to the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment when he was found dead of an apparent heat stroke following his return from an August 11, 2003 mission.

Staff Sgt. Eaton was awarded the Army's Bronze Star and the Military Intelligence Corps Association's Knowlton Award, both posthumously. Staff Sgt. Eaton was recognized repeatedly for exemplary achievement during his service in the Regular Army and Army Reserves, including the Army Commendation Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters (four awards), Army Achievement Medal with one Silver and Oak Leaf Cluster each (seven awards), the Good Conduct Medal (three awards), the National Defense Service Medal with Star Device, the Army Superior Unit Award, the noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon with two Devices, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon (five awards), and the Expert Marksmanship Badge with bars for rifle, pistol and grenade. As the *Connecticut State Register and Manual* was going to print, his nomination for induction into the Military Intelligence Hall of Fame was being prepared.

He is survived by his parents, former State Senator Richard S. Eaton, Sr., and Sharon Noble Eaton of Guilford. He was buried in the historic Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, not far from the tomb of his great-great-grandfather General Amos B. Eaton, U.S.A.

Photograph and text courtesy of the Eaton Family.



Army Sergeant David Travis Friedrich

Sergeant David “Travis” Friedrich was born March 10, 1977, in Middlebury, Vt., the son of David and Elizabeth (Neal) Friedrich. He graduated from Gouverneur High School in 1995, attended the Delta Honors College at SUNY Brockport, from where he graduated Cum Laude with a B.S. in chemistry. While a student, he interned with the Ogdensburg Police Department, as well as in Edinburgh, Scotland where he created a toxicology database for the Leeds and Borders Police Department.

Friedrich worked undercover for a private investigator in the Boston, Massachusetts area before enrolling in the U.S. Army Reserves, Military Intelligence. His first deployment was in the United States. He enrolled in the Forensic Science master's program at the University of New Haven in Connecticut and worked for a large pharmaceutical company.

He had nearly finished his degree when he was deployed for a second time, this time to Iraq. Friedrich was a sergeant serving with B Company, 325th Military Intelligence Battalion, based out of Waterbury, Conn.

Friedrich enjoyed running, in which he was competitive in high school and college. He completed the Burlington Marathon in Vermont in May 2001. He also enjoyed downhill skiing and windsurfing.

Sergeant David Travis Friedrich died September 20, 2003 in a mortar strike at a U.S. Army base in Abu Gareeb, Iraq.

Photograph and text courtesy of the Friedrich Family.



Army Private First Class Anthony D'Agostino

Pfc. Anthony D'Agostino of Waterbury was one of 16 who died after a CH-47 Chinook helicopter was shot down over Iraq Nov. 2, 2003. He was a communications specialist attached to the 16th Signal Brigade in Fort Hood, Texas. He was 20 years old.

Anthony's father, Steve D'Agostino describes his son as someone who loved playing with Legos as a child, and who was loyally devoted to the television show "The Simpsons." He remembered giving Anthony his first dirt bike for his birthday in eighth grade.

He joined the military after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. His family said he had dreams of attending the U.S. Military Academy and making the military his career.

D'Agostino was born in Georgia, when his father was in the military. He graduated from Kaynor Vocational Technical School in Waterbury with a specialty in electricity.

D'Agostino was the sixth member of the military from Connecticut to die in Iraq.

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Army Sergeant Major Phillip R. Albert

Army Sgt. Maj. Phillip R. Albert was killed on November 23, 2003 when the transport helicopter he was aboard went down shortly after leaving Bagram Air Base in northeastern Afghanistan.

Albert grew up in the Terryville section of Plymouth and was 41. He joined the Army after high school.

Albert's family was presented with the Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and a Combat Infantryman Badge.

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Army Private First Class Jeffrey Braun

Jeff Braun was born on July 24, 1984 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras and was adopted by William and Meredith Braun when he was 6 months old. From early on, Jeff was a curious, friendly, outgoing, and active boy with a contagious smile that could light up a room. Highly intelligent, Jeff was an avid reader and pursued a wide variety of literary interests, which ran the gamut from comic books and fantasy to mysteries, political thrillers and the Bible. He always prided himself on his vocabulary, and his verbal ability and wit contributed to his being an excellent debater and philosopher.

A successful student, Jeff's independence and unquenchable desire to always be involved led him to join many activities in middle and high school. In fourth grade he personally began a chess club which endures until this day. Enthusiastic and described as an extremely "coachable" athlete, Jeff played soccer, both indoor and outdoor, was on the track and field team and was on the wrestling team. He was also involved in music, service corps and church activities.

Friendships were very important to Jeff and he always had a wide variety of friends in addition to having a core of close friends that he maintained close ties with until his death. A natural leader and imbuing others with his positive outlook on life, Jeff often organized activities and had numerous goals and aspirations. He was concerned with the plight of the downtrodden and wanted to help others less fortunate than himself. Truly delighted with the arrival of his sister when he was three, Jeff became Julie's protector during high school and had continued this role while in the military. Due to Jeff's involvement in so many areas of life and his incredible personality, vitality, and sense of humor, his influence on people's lives was widespread.

Jeff joined the Armed Forces to help give himself direction, meet the physical and mental challenges of military service, and to have the opportunity to travel before beginning college to study to be a physical education teacher, a career path from which he had never deviated. Jeff received numerous honors and awards while in military training and when stationed in Iraq. He was highly respected and appreciated by his fellow troops and commanding officers because of both his skills and his positive outlook and attitude. His desire to build an orphanage in his birth country of Honduras and the fact that he had already begun the process to have this dream reach fruition is just one of the indicators that Jeff Braun was a truly extraordinary young man with the potential to make great contributions to our world. Jeff was a young man of courage and convictions who touched the lives of many people.

Photograph and text courtesy of the Braun Family.



Army Captain Eric Thomas Paliwoda

United States Army Captain Eric Thomas Paliwoda, 28, formerly of West Hartford, Connecticut was killed in action on January 2, 2004 in Balad, Iraq. Born February 23, 1975 in Hartford, Eric was the beloved son of Alfred and Mary Paliwoda of Sedona, Arizona. In addition to his parents, he is survived by his fiancée Wendy Rosen of Hartsdale, New York, his sister and brother-in-law Allison and Captain Jeff Csoka of Clarksville, Tennessee, and his uncle, aunt and cousins Thomas, Susan, Michael, and Cailin Luneburg of Danville, California. Eric is predeceased by his maternal grandparents Phyllis and Thomas Luneburg and paternal grandparents Helen and Jan Paliwoda.

Growing up in Farmington, Connecticut, Eric attended West District Elementary School and Irving A. Robbins Middle School. Eric graduated from West Hartford's Conard High School in 1993, where he was an exceptional student and an All-State and All-American honored basketball player. During high school, he received a congressional nomination and was accepted to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Eric entered the Academy in 1993 and over his four years there was a member of Army's Division I Basketball and Track & Field teams. He graduated from West Point in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science degree and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army.

Following graduation from the Academy, Eric traveled to Fort Hood, Texas where he served as both a Platoon Leader and an Executive Officer for an Engineer Battalion. He then moved to Fort Carson, Colorado where he was the Battalion Personnel Officer in the 4th Engineer Battalion and Assistant Brigade Engineer for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 4th Infantry Division. Eric's extensive military education included graduation from the Engineer Officer Basic Course, the Scout Platoon Leaders Course, the Armor Officer Advanced Course, the Combined Arms Services Staff School, and the Cavalry Leaders Course.

Over the course of his career, Eric was awarded both the Army Commendation Medal and the Army Achievement Medal twice, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Army Service Ribbon. Eric was honored with a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star posthumously. Eric served as Company Commander for Bravo Company, 4th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom since April 2003. He had also recently been chosen to return to West Point as an instructor in the Department of Environmental Studies.

Eric will be terribly missed by all of those who knew, loved and cherished him. As a special leader and friend, he reached, touched and changed many lives during his brief time on this earth.

Photograph and text courtesy of the Paliwoda Family.



Army Sergeant Benjamin Gilman

Army Sgt. Benjamin Gilman was assigned to the 41st Engineering Battalion with the 10th Mountain Division, based at Fort Drum, N.Y. He was killed January 29, 2004 in an accidental explosion as he and members of his unit were attempting to dispose of a weapons cache in a village near Ghazni, Afghanistan.

Gilman was a lifelong resident of Meriden and a graduate of Platt High School where he participated in the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America and the school's culinary club. He was also active in the Meriden-Wallingford Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. He had worked at the Roy Rogers restaurant in the Westfield Shoppingtown Meriden mall for several years and had volunteered at the former Meriden-Wallingford Hospital.

He enlisted in the Army in 1996. He is survived by his mother, Edith R. Gilman of Meriden, and his maternal grandmother, Ruth A. Gilman of Tacoma, Washington.

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Army Specialist Tyanna Avery-Felder

U.S. Army Spec. Tyanna Avery-Felder died April 6, 2004 from wounds sustained after being hit by shrapnel.

Avery-Felder was married to Adrian Felder, a soldier she met at Fort Lewis south of Tacoma, Wash. Her husband stayed in Seattle when she was sent to Iraq last year.

The second of three children, Tyanna was a graduate of Kolbe Cathedral High School in Bridgeport, CT. She had planned on working with children and enrolled at Southern Connecticut State University, but left after a year and joined the Army. She completed basic training in South Carolina in 2001.

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Army Sergeant Felix Delgreco

Sgt. Felix Delgreco of Simsbury, a member of C Company, 102nd Infantry in Bristol, was killed April 9, 2004 while on patrol in Baghdad, when his vehicle struck an improvised bomb and was attacked with small arms. He was the first member of the Connecticut Army National Guard to die in Iraq. He was 22 years old.

A member of Simsbury High's Class of 1999, Delgreco played trumpet in the jazz band. He worked as part of the backstage technical crew on school plays and other performances.

As a teen, Delgreco had an abiding interest in the military and enlisted in the guard in 1999 while still in high school. He became a member of C Company, 102nd Infantry, in Bristol.

The company left Connecticut on Jan. 8 for Fort Hood, Texas, and became part of the 39th Brigade from Arkansas. The unit arrived in Kuwait and began patrolling in Baghdad.

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Coast Guard Petty Officer Nathan B. Bruckenthal

Petty Officer 3rd Class Nathan B. Bruckenthal, who lived in Ridgefield during his teens, died April 24, 2004 in an attack near the Khawr Al Amaya oil terminal. His was the first combat death for the Coast Guard since the Vietnam War. He was 24 years old.

Bruckenthal, assigned to the Coast Guard Air Station in Florida's Miami-Dade County and serving his second tour of duty in Iraq, died of injuries suffered during an attack on the terminal by suicide bombers in boats.

Though the Coast Guard is traditionally associated with shoreline patrols, port security and rescue missions, there are about 300 Coast Guard members serving in the Iraq war.

At the peak of the war, 1,250 guardsmen were deployed, working with the Navy to provide security.

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Army Private First Class Melissa Hobart

Army Private First Class Melissa Hobart, who grew up in East Haven, died June 6, 2004 while serving guard duty in Baghdad. She was 22, and leaves behind a 3-year-old daughter.

Melissa Hobart had lived in Ladson, S.C. for about six years.

She entered the military, her brother and mother said, to help her country and provide for her daughter Alexis.

After earning a GED, Hobart attended nursing school at Trident Technical College for a year, her mother said, before deciding to join the Army.

Her family described her as personable and caring - someone who, in her brother Gary's words, "would be willing to help anybody." She loved to listen to music and watch movies with her friends, her mother said, and was an avid reader of Stephen King novels.

While in Iraq with Company E, 215th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, Melissa made a special effort to keep in touch with her family. "She used to call all the time and talk to her daughter," her brother Gary said. "She also made it a priority to call everyone else in the family."

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Army Specialist Jacob D. Martir

Army Spec. Jacob D. Martir, a native of Puerto Rico who grew up in Willimantic and Norwich, was killed Aug. 18, 2004 by small-arms fire while on patrol in a part of Baghdad known as Sadr City. He was 21 years old. Martir originally joined the Army in 2000, fulfilling a dream he had held since childhood to be a soldier.

Don Primavera, a family friend, said Martir was a "happy-go-lucky kid" who liked to joke around. Born in Caguas, Puerto Rico, he moved to Connecticut when he was young, living in Willimantic and Norwich. He attended Norwich Free Academy briefly, earned his high school equivalence diploma at Westover Job Corps Center in Chicopee, Mass., then enlisted when he was 17. "It made him proud to be able to serve his country," Primavera said.

Martir was awarded the Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for meritorious service. Martir served with Alpha Troop, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, based in Fort Hood, Texas.

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