

In Memoriam

★ Captain Sean E. Lyerly '98

CAPT. SEAN EDWARD LYERLY, 31, OF Pflugerville, was killed in action Jan. 20, 2007, while serving on Active Duty in Iraq. He was a crew member on a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter involved in a crash.

Lyerly graduated from Stratford High School in Houston in 1994 and enrolled at Texas A&M University in January 1995, where he was a member of Company L-1 in the Corps of Cadets and later Parsons Mounted Cavalry. He earned a bachelor's degree in horticulture from Texas A&M University in May of 2000.

Lyerly entered military service as a private in the Texas Army National Guard on Oct. 26, 1996, and was advanced in grade to Private E-2

before enrolling as a Cadet in the Reserve Officers Training Course (ROTC) at Texas A&M.

In joining the military, Lyerly continued a family tradition of military service. His father, George Lyerly '67, and two Aggie uncles served in the Army during Vietnam.

"It's obvious," said George Lyerly, when asked why it was important for his son to serve his country. "We all have."

Ordered to active duty on Feb. 1, 2006, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Lyerly and his unit, the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, based in Austin, Texas, arrived in the OIF area of operations in August 2006 to provide aviation support and security throughout the combat zone.

His awards and decorations include the Army Aviator Badge, Army Service Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, Reserve Components Achievement Medal with M Device, Army Achievement Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Commendation Medal, and is being recommended for the posthumous award of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star Medal with V Device for his selfless service and acts of heroism and valor.

Lyerly is survived by his wife, Csilla, and their son, Zackary, 3, of

Pflugerville; mother Deborah Russo-Blakeman and husband John of California; father George Lyerly '67 and wife Monica of Bryan; grandmothers Virginia Lyerly of Caldwell and Elvina Rachal Russo of Louisiana; brother George Edward Lyerly, Jr. of Bryan; and godfather Louis Russo of Louisiana.

Lyerly's life was celebrated with a funeral mass Jan. 29 at St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church in Pflugerville with burial following at Capital Parks Cemetery in Pflugerville.



★ Lance Corporal Luke Yepsen '08

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS Lance Cpl. Luke C. Yepsen '08, of Kingwood, Texas, died Dec. 14, 2006, due to injuries suffered from enemy action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Yepsen was assigned to 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, California.



Yepsen graduated from Kingwood High School in 2004. He was a mechanical engineering major at Texas A&M University until leaving to join the United States Marine Corps during his freshman year. After completing basic training in August 2006 Yepsen deployed to Iraq in October.

In a published statement, Yepsen's family said, "Luke had a strong

desire to serve the country. He wanted to fight for the things we hold dear and since he was strong and capable, and armed with his faith in God, he felt the need to protect us."

The family relayed that "he loved playing with his nieces and nephews and was loved deeply by them. He was a large, strapping young man with a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, but mostly he had a big heart."

Yepsen is survived by his parents, Gary and Sheila Yepsen of Kingwood; brother Kyle Yepsen of Fort Worth; and his fiancée, Sandra Brumen.

Family and friends remembered Yepsen with a candlelight vigil of prayers and songs Friday, Dec. 15 in Kingwood. Services for Yepsen were held Thursday, Dec. 21 at St. Martha's Catholic Church in Kingwood with burial following at Houston National Cemetery.

As family members traveled to the church for Yepsen's funeral, they were greeted by a patriotic procession of more than 500 members of their community, waving American flags in a show of appreciation and support for Yepsen's life, service and sacrifice.



My name is **Tom Skrocki '88**, and I am currently serving as the deputy commander for the 379th Expeditionary Operations Group. I'd like to thank everyone for their support of the troops and personally thank all the men and women in uniform who are currently deployed. It is a pleasure to serve with you all. To my family, thank you for your love and support—I look forward to our reunion in July. Gig 'em Ags!

Lt. Col. Thomas J. Skrocki '88, USAF Deputy Commander, 379 EOG



Major Stephen Blake '93 served as commander, 557th Expeditionary Red Horse Squadron, located at Mosul, Tikrit, and Al Asad Iraq. The 400-person squadron completed \$14 million in mission-critical construction over their seven-month deployment. Blake returned home safely in December 2006.



CW2 **T.J. Saari '99**, a UH-60 Blackhawk Pilot with the 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, is currently serving his second tour in Iraq for the next year. TJ was a member of Company A-1 Corps of Cadets and a Bonfire Redpot.