

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

The Acting PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to three of Oklahoma's finest heroes.

SGT Daniel Eshbaugh, of Norman, OK.

CWO Brady Rudolf, of Oklahoma City, OK.

And CPL Michael Thompson, of Harrah, OK.

They were among the soldiers who were killed on September 17, 2008 in Tallil, Iraq, when their CH-47 Chinook helicopter crashed while en route from Kuwait to Balad Air Base north of Baghdad.

SGT Eshbaugh, CWO Rudolf and CPL Thompson were members of Detachment 1, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 149th Aviation, from Lexington, OK.

The unit, which is made up of approximately 200 Texas and Oklahoma Guard members, was mobilized in June and left for duty in Iraq in late August.

All three were on their second tour in Iraq.

SGT DANIEL ESHBAUGH

SGT Dan Eshbaugh served as a flight engineer in the 149th.

He enlisted in the Air Force in 1982 and served for 10 years.

Dan joined the Oklahoma Army National Guard in 1998 and served until 2000.

In 2002, he reenlisted in the Oklahoma Army National Guard and was mobilized in 2008.

Dan's first deployment was in 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, spending 4 months in theater.

Dan leaves behind his wife Rachel and their two sons, Bryan and Jordan.

He is also survived by his two daughters, Jessica and Ashley, and his mother, Bernadine.

Yesterday I talked with Dan's wife Rachel and she talked about Dan's love for the Army, that it was his "whole life".

In addition to his deep love and commitment to our country, he also loved to hunt and loved sports.

I read through some of the comments written on Dan's on-line guest books.

Many people wrote about Dan's sense of humor, his ability to tell good stories, and his love for his family.

It was obvious that Dan enjoyed spending time with his entire family together, at reunions, over meals, and watching sports.

I want to share excerpts from a few.

Danny . . . My Big Brother . . . Thank you for trying to make peace in this insane world, so that our children can have a safe place to someday raise their children. Ian and Arden will always remember their Uncle Danny. I find comfort in knowing that your spirit is together with Grandpa and Dad. I know they have embraced you. The strength of three generations of Eshbaugh's looking over us will be the strength that we all hold in our hearts. I will love you forever . . . your little sister Kimberlee."

There are so many memories I have to cherish of my cousin "Danny". He was so much fun to see when our families would get together on visits to Grandma and Grandpa's house when we were young. . . . I will cherish these and all the memories that I have. I am so proud to be your cousin.

We are proud of Dan's dedication and loyalty to protecting this country. God grant us the wisdom to be worthy of his ultimate sacrifice. Dan, may you, my brother Dan and my Dad find your "mansion" up there overlooking a fully stocked lake in that happy hunting ground."

And from Dan's friends and the soldiers he served with the entire family, nieces, nephews, and cousins, they all said that Dan, or "Danny" as his family called him, was an inspiration for all to follow and had a positive impact on all who met him.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER BRADY RUDOLF

CWO Brady Rudolf served as a CH-47 "Chinook" pilot in the 149th and had been in the National Guard for over 20 years.

Brady was also a pharmacist when not on duty.

In 2003, he deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and spent 4 months in theater.

Brady is survived by his wife of 13 years, Jennifer, and their three sons Braden, Ty, and Nate.

Brady is also survived by his mother Nathalia and brother Dustin.

Last night, I spoke to Jennifer, Brady's wife, and we talked about Brady's love of flying, something, as a pilot myself, I can fully understand.

Jennifer also talked about his strong faith and commitment to Jesus.

Dustin Rudolf, Brady's brother, said Brady was a dedicated father, husband and soldier who comes from a long line of servicemen in the Rudolf family.

"He was a great father, a great husband and just an all-around great human being. The sacrifice he gave for our freedom and what we live for here in America is an awesome thing and he knew it and he lived it."

Dustin also said that his brother was voted class clown by his graduating class.

"He was a jokester but he could be serious too when it mattered," Dustin said.

"He was a conscientious pilot who liked to take care of people. He would give the shirt off his back for anyone."

The following is from Brady's online journal:

One of his co-workers from the pharmacy wrote,

I worked with Brady for several years at the Pharmacy in Newcastle. Of the many things I could say about him, these seem the most important: He spoke with deep adoration and love for his family and his faith in the Lord. He was always proud of the smallest accomplishments and milestones his boys achieved. . . . Thank you for allowing me to share in a small part of his life. Because of Brady's love and faith in the Lord, I was able to find my way back to my faith. Thank you, Brady, for your service to our beloved country.

From a fellow classmate in pharmacy school:

We were in pharmacy school with Brady. He was an excellent man of values and had a great love for his family. Brady was an encouragement to be around.

And finally a friend wrote:

I remember Brady as a blonde-headed, bright eyed, fun-loving All-American boy. His smile would light the room. It is apparent that he grew up to be a man of such good character—an All-American Hero! . . . May Brady's legacy of service to others be carried on by each of us. Your family is in my thoughts and prayers.

CPL MICHAEL THOMPSON

CPL Michael Thompson served as a door gunner in the 149th.

Michael graduated Kingston High School in 2003 and then enlisted in the Army in 2004.

He left active-duty service and joined the Oklahoma Army National Guard in 2007.

Michael previously deployed to Iraq in 2005 and spent 11 months in theater.

Michael is survived by his father Kory Thompson of Harrah, OK, his mother Angela Perry, his stepfather Richard Perry, and sister Jami.

Michael also leaves behind his fiancée, KC Colvin.

When I talked with Michael's mom Angela last night, she spoke about how her son's love for people and how he was loved by everyone.

He never met a stranger he did not like and who did not like him; even the mailman loved Mikey, Mikey was the name he is affectionately known by his many friends and family.

Mikey was full of personality and he loved to hunt and fish.

Family members said that he volunteered to go to Iraq because the Army needed a qualified open-door machine gunner.

"He was qualified for machine guns from his active duty in the military before this," said Richard Perry, Michael's stepfather. "He volunteered to go to help out."

CPT Travis Ward, an Oklahoma Guard helicopter pilot, said Michael transferred into the Oklahoma Army National Guard at the first of the year after serving in the infantry.

"He made two drill weekends with us and on the second one, he heard the rumor that the deploying units were looking for people to be door gunners.

"As soon as he heard that, Michael came straight to me and asked if he