

Editorial: Tribute to a Warrior-Servant

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As our nation approaches Veterans Day 2013, it is fitting to remember the life of a young American soldier who was among four service members killed in Afghanistan on October 6, 2013.

The usually imposing edifice of the Pentagon was diminished by the foreground of marble headstones in Arlington National Cemetery. One of the last internments of the day was for a young Ranger, Sergeant Patrick Hawkins. Those gathered to honor Patrick included family and friends, serving comrades in arms, neighbors and retirees, and motorcyclists who accompanied the funeral procession. Although the attending senior officials were the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army, rank did not matter. All joined equally in somberly celebrating the life, service and sacrifice of this young soldier.

In an award ceremony earlier in the day, we heard his father recount the life of a son emerging as a young man in the 21st century. Full of passion, Patrick sought to find himself in skateboarding, cars, music, and cooking—a typical celebrant of our American pop culture. His dad, a retired colonel, spoke of how he and his wife supported Patrick in his many endeavors. We can readily imagine the pride of his parents when Patrick told them he wanted to join the Army. In our Carlisle community, many sons and daughters follow their mothers and fathers' example of military service. At a time when the nation's culture seems to neglect building the character and values of our youth, we see evidence to the contrary in Carlisle.

Patrick excelled as a soldier. He qualified as an Airborne Ranger and was assigned to a Ranger battalion. He served several combat tours in Afghanistan. His fellow ranger sergeant and buddy informed us that Patrick was not just a tab-and-badge wearer, he was a leader among his peers and of others placed in his charge. His buddy also told how Patrick met and pursued the love of his life, Brittanie, his young bride. Patrick's passion for life was intensified by his love for his wife, his family, and his nation. This hardened warrior had a loving spirit.

Patrick's body tattoos, the artifacts of his generation, displayed the legacy of his family's immigrant past. He was all American. Patrick's mother told us that he had another special tattoo added after joining the Army. It epitomized his service—especially on the final day of his life as he rushed to the aid of comrades: John 15:13, "**Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**"

The Army Secretary and Chief Of Staff spoke briefly to the family of Sergeant Patrick C. Hawkins, then stepped aside. After honors were rendered with a 21-gun salute, the presiding officer concluded the ceremony with: "On behalf of the President of the United States and the people of a grateful nation, I present this flag as a token of appreciation for the honorable and faithful service your loved one rendered this nation." We too should honor the sacrifice of a warrior-servant as one of our own.

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