



## **IVY SAEBENS IS RUNNING FOR ARMY COMMAND SGT. MAJ. MARILYN L. GABBARD**

Died January 20, 2007 Serving During Operation Iraqi Freedom 46, of Polk City, Iowa; assigned to Joint Forces Headquarters, Iowa Army National Guard, Camp Dodge, Johnston, Iowa; died in Baghdad on Jan. 20 when the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter she was in crashed.

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JOHNSTON, Iowa (AP) In the tight-knit headquarters of the Iowa National Guard in Johnston, Command Sgt. Maj. Marilyn L. Gabbard was known for her near perpetual smile. “She was always smiling,” her friend, Sgt. Maj. Renee Blodgett, said Wednesday. “And she always had a smile to give.” With the smile came a drive and determination, colleagues said. Gabbard enlisted with the Iowa National Guard in 1979, the same year she graduated from Boone High School, and spent the next 27 years in the Guard, starting as a personnel management specialist and earning a reputation as an adept problem solver. She was the first woman in the Iowa Guard to attain the rank of command sergeant major. “She was a person who did not say ‘no,’” said Lt. Col. Greg Hapgood. “She was the person who, if you had a project that was difficult and you weren’t sure who to give it to, she was the person you would give it to.”



Gabbard was killed Saturday in a Black Hawk helicopter crash northeast of Baghdad, officials said. She was 46. She is believed to be the first woman in the history of the Iowa National Guard to be killed in combat. Military officials said Gabbard’s helicopter might have been shot down, and an investigation is ongoing. She was one of 12 National Guard members from seven states and the U.S. Virgin Islands killed in the crash. Gabbard was the 50th Iowan \_ and the 19th member of the Iowa National Guard \_ to die while training for or serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.



Gabbard lived in Polk City with her husband, Edward. She was serving her first deployment in Iraq, leaving Iowa on Dec. 16 to serve as a non-commissioned officer in charge of the National Guard Affairs Team in Baghdad. Gabbard welcomed the challenge, Blodgett said, in part because she took such pride in training her fellow soldiers. “She loved the National Guard. She loved people. She was always looking out for others,” she said. Gabbard was a role model for women, said Blodgett, who credits her steady climb in the Iowa National Guard for easing the way for other women to win promotions.

Blodgett was one of about 50 people who packed into an auditorium at Joint Forces Headquarters in Johnston for a press conference held to announce Gabbard’s death. Most at the Guard’s headquarters already knew of Gabbard’s death when they filed into the room, filling in seats and standing at the back of the auditorium. “In some ways this was closure,” Hapgood said. “But it’s also causing people to call upon their memories of Marilyn.” Although Hapgood agreed Gabbard was a role model for women, he said it would be a mistake to let her gender classify her, or her influence. “She didn’t take it as a burden,” he said of her gender. “She embraced the fact that she had gone places other people hadn’t gone before. I think she relished having soldiers look up to her.”



Gabbard leaves behind her husband, Edward Gabbard; daughter, Melissa Danielson; mother, Mary Van Cannon; brothers, Mark and Mike Van Cannon; sister, Marla Noren; two grandchildren; five step daughters; and a stepson.