



BRITTANY POZZI TONOZZI IS RUNNING FOR ARMY PFC. SAM W. HUFF

Slain Soldier Reached Beyond Expectations

By Ian Shapira

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Not many people, including her parents, considered Sam W. Huff to be obvious Army material. She was petite -- just over 5 feet tall -- didn't play any major sports and was best known at Tucson's Mountain View High School for her striking beauty and sharp fashion sense.

But the marching band drum major was also feisty and persistent, a conductor with a loud voice and commanding presence. With relatives who had served in the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, the 18-year-old had precise career goals: a tour of duty in the military, a college degree in psychology and a job at the FBI profiling criminals. After graduating from high school last year, Huff completed the grueling months of basic training and then, around Christmas, visited her old stomping grounds before being deployed to Iraq.

"She told me basic training was really hard, how she was having problems with her knee and that they tried talking her out of the Army," said Ellen Kirkbride, band director at Mountain View. "But she pleaded with them to stay. She would have felt as if she failed. She was tough."

On April 18, Pfc. Huff died in Baghdad from injuries she received the night before when the Humvee she was driving was hit by a roadside bomb, according to the Army. Yesterday, she became the 130th soldier killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. She was a member of the 170th Military Police Company, 504th Military Police Battalion, 42nd Military Police Brigade, based at Fort Lewis, Wash.

Her parents, Robert Huff, 50, a retired police detective-turned-musician, and Margaret Williams, 52, a former Marine and communications supervisor for a suburban Tucson police department, accepted the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and Good Conduct Medal on her behalf during the service.





Robert Huff, who spoke with Army officials about the circumstances of his daughter's death, said that she had spent the night of April 17 guarding an Iraqi police station. She and others in her unit were headed back to their base on the outskirts of Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated next to the Humvee's driver's side. Huff was the only one seriously injured, according to Maj. Elizabeth Robbins, an Army spokeswoman.

The blast severed Huff's leg, and "there was nothing anyone could do and she bled to death," Robert Huff said. Huff was supposed to operate the machine gun on the top of the Humvee, he said, but she was not strong enough to load the weapon quickly. So, the petite soldier with a penchant for Disney ballads learned how to pilot the monstrous Humvee.



Teachers at Mountain View High said the community has been crushed by her death. At a recent memorial service at Casas Adobes Baptist Church in Tucson, the marching band played two of her favorite ballads, Kirkbride said: one from "Beauty and the Beast," another from "The Little Mermaid." On the stage, a black marching band hat -- adorned with a plume of black and silver feathers -- sat next to her combat helmet, Kirkbride said.

Robert Huff said he'll never forget what an Army official told him about his daughter's last moments. As she was bleeding, she told a sergeant next to her that she wanted him to pass along a message to her parents.

"He said, 'No, you'll be able to make the call yourself.' Then she said: 'No, I don't think I can make it. Tell my mom I love her, and tell my Dad good luck with his album.' "

