



JESSICA TELFORD IS RUNNING FOR ARMY PFC. HOLLY J. MCGEOGH

Army Pfc. Holly J. McGeogh Died January 31, 2004 Serving During Operation Iraqi Freedom

19, of Taylor, Mich.; assigned to Company A, 4th Forward Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (Mech), Fort Hood, Texas; killed Jan. 31 when her vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device in Kirkuk, Iraq.



Friends, family mourn Michigan woman killed in Iraq

By Sarah Karush

Associated Press

WYANDOTTE, Mich. — Pfc. Holly J. McGeogh, a 19-year-old Michigan woman killed in Iraq, was remembered Monday as someone who loved the outdoors and was dedicated to serving her country.

“She died for a cause she believed in,” the Rev. T.J. Moloney said during the service at St. Joseph Catholic Church. “Her death reminds us that freedom is not free.”

McGeogh, from the Detroit suburb of Taylor, was one of three people killed Jan. 31 by a roadside bomb about 27 miles south of Kirkuk. She was a light-truck mechanic assigned to Company A, 4th Forward Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, from Fort Hood, Texas.

Moloney said McGeogh’s friends remembered her as a person with a great sense of humor who enjoyed hunting with her father.

“And like all teens, she loved shopping,” he said.

McGeogh graduated in 2002 from Truman High School in Taylor, where she was a cadet in the Junior ROTC.

Brig. Gen. Donald F. Schenk, who represented the Army at the funeral, addressed the mourners on behalf of the family.





He recounted how McGeogh called home in October, two days after a female soldier was killed in Tikrit, where she was based. The call put to rest the family's fear that it had been McGeogh who was killed.

McGeogh told her parents that the soldier who died had been her good friend and roommate.

“She said if she were to die we should remember that she died for a reason,” Schenk said. “Holly will always be remembered as a very, very brave soldier.”

Bishop John Quinn of Detroit thanked McGeogh's family “for giving us such a brave daughter that should serve our nation in this way.”

The other two soldiers killed in the explosion with McGeogh were identified by the Defense Department as Sgt. Eliu Miersandoval, 27, of San Clemente, Calif., and Cpl. Juan C. Cabral-Banuelos, 25, of Emporia, Kan.

Pfc. Holly J. McGeogh aimed for the Army from early in high school. She spent four years as a cadet with the JROTC before joining up after she graduated in 2002.

“She was totally dedicated to going into the Army — that was her destiny,” said her high school guidance counselor, William Teller. Teller said the uniform she wore to school once a week was festooned with medals.

The 19-year-old light-truck mechanic from Taylor, Mich., was killed Jan. 31 when her vehicle struck a homemade explosive device near the northern Iraq city of Kirkuk. She was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas.

“Holly is another reminder that our freedom truly is not free. Holly and her friends paid the ultimate price for all of us, without complaint or regret,” the family said in a statement.





TV special casts light on soldier's devotion, family's grief
Associated Press

TAYLOR, Mich. — Paula Zasadny hopes that by sharing her daughter's final letters home through a TV special, she will make sure the fallen 19-year-old will not be forgotten.

Spc. Holly McGeogh, of Taylor, became Michigan's first female soldier killed in the war in Iraq on Jan. 31 when a homemade roadside bomb exploded as her convoy drove past in Kirkuk. She was assigned to Company A, 4th Forward Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, based at Fort Hood, Texas.



At Christmas last year, McGeogh sent her mother and stepfather cards that urged them to celebrate the holidays for her. The cards arrived a few days after her funeral.

"She had told me that there was a Christmas box coming home and that she had gotten me a really cool Iraqi rug," Zasadny told the Detroit Free Press for a Wednesday story. "I never got that box. I have a feeling that the box was in her vehicle when it exploded."

As part of the recently aired HBO special "Last Letters Home," an HBO crew spent a day with the Zasadnys in July, taping them as they read McGeogh's letter and talked about their love for her.

"At first I didn't want to do it, but when I learned that the show wouldn't be political or anti-war, I changed my mind," Zasadny said. "I wanted to make sure she wasn't forgotten. It was very difficult to watch because she had been gone for so long already. Watching it was reality, and everyone now and again, I guess, we need that reality."

McGeogh joined the Army immediately after graduating from Truman High School in Taylor in 2002, where she was a cadet in the Junior ROTC for four years. She planned a career in Army intelligence or psychology. She also was planning to continue her education.

"She absolutely loved the Army," Zasadny said. "One time she told me: 'Mom, you have to understand that I am doing exactly what I want to do and if I die doing it, I will die doing something I believe in.'"





“Those are her words that I will remember.”

Mother remembers her “Willy” killed in Iraq

By Hugo Kugiya

Associated Press

Willy was what Paula Zasadny called her baby girl, Holly. It was the random result of a silly rhyming game she played with her daughter. “Holly, wolly, bolly” eventually became “Willy” and for some reason the name stuck.

To the day Spc. Holly J. McGeogh died — on Jan. 31, at age 19, victim of a roadside bomb near Kirkuk — she was Willy, if only to her mother.

That is how she signed the Christmas card last year — “Love Willy.” It arrived about two weeks after she died, in a box with other items.



“It was devastating,” said Zasadny, who lives in Taylor, Mich., “but at same time it was comforting because I knew she had touched everything in the box.”

Willy was her youngest child and only daughter. She was a fearless kid who always wanted to ride the newest, biggest, fastest roller coaster at Cedar Point, and did not flinch when she tried bungee jumping. She was 5-foot-1 and the company commander in Junior ROTC.

In Iraq, she was a meticulous truck mechanic and drove a troop transport truck with a grenade launcher mounted on the back. She eagerly volunteered for every mission and patrol and was disappointed when she was not picked. She once apprehended a fleeing man in a dark alley, threatening to shoot him dead if he didn’t stop, then throwing him against a wall.

But she also taught Iraqi kids the game duck-duck-goose, and gave them licorice. She could never get her mom to mail enough candy. Or hot sauce from Taco Bell. Willy put it on everything. Unable to convince her local Taco Bell to sell her a box of hot sauce, Zasadny ate there everyday, collecting enough packets to mail to Iraq.

When Willy helped bring running water to a village, she splashed and played in the spray.

Like the kid she was, not that long ago.

