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MEDIA RELEASE: Car wreck claims warfighter's life

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FORT BENNING, Ga. – Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas R. Morgan, 50, died March 29 from injuries received from an accident on Oglethorpe Bridge.

Morgan, the command sergeant major of 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment, was driving west toward Phenix City on U.S. Highway 280 when he was involved in an accident that caused his vehicle to leave the highway.

Described as a seasoned Infantryman with a quiet, calming demeanor for training Soldiers, Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Hummel, Armor School command sergeant major, said Morgan's reputation was the reason why Soldiers "considered him a father figure."

Morgan enlisted in the Marine Corps in July 1983, serving four years with the 2nd Marine Division. He then served 10 years with the Alabama National Guard before he joined the Army in 1998.

"He was extremely knowledgeable in Infantry skills and able to share that expertise with (junior Soldiers)," Hummel said.

"What hurts the most is it's a small world and the Army is even smaller — this is a huge loss for our Fort Benning Family," Hummel said. "Our hearts go out to his Family, children and extended Family. It's hard to say goodbye to one of our own."

Col. John Cushing, 194th Armored Brigade commander, said Morgan epitomized excellence; that when one looks at the Maneuver Center of Excellence, Morgan's life with the battalion, brigade and the Army are better because of his efforts.

"He strived for excellence every single day," Cushing said. "He had an enthusiasm for life that was hard to capture ... everyone wanted to be part of his team."

Morgan served with the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Benning's 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., and 1st Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Maj. Justin Malone, now with 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, was the company commander of D Company, 1st Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., when Morgan served as the first sergeant during a yearlong deployment to Iraq that stretched into Operation New Dawn.

"I loved him like a brother," Malone said describing Morgan as a dynamic personality who everyone loved.

"He was a senior NCO who got the job done while showing tough love," Malone said.

"Not only did he set up a NCO Academy that trained hundreds of Iraqi soldiers, but his commitment to the mission and the Soldiers of Delta Company was inspiring."

He was well respected throughout the battalion and brigade, Malone remembered.

"His influence and leadership was critical to the success of our company; the Soldiers thrived off of his enthusiasm and charisma," he said.

Morgan earned the Bronze Star with V device as a staff sergeant while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom I in 2003 with B Co., 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., taking part in the initial push into Baghdad.

His citation reads in part, "as a squad leader, his courage under fire and unending enthusiasm inspired his team on the battlefield. His capability to perform multiple skilled tasks while under fire facilitated unparalleled success for the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) to defeat enemy forces and liberate Iraq."

Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Andrews, command sergeant major of 194th Armored Brigade, said Morgan will be remembered as a man who truly cared about people, who never met a stranger and a person everyone wanted as a friend.

"(Morgan) was a good friend and an amazingly capable leader who will be sorely missed," Andrews said.

"He truly cared about Soldiers," continued Andrews explaining that Morgan looked for opportunities to make his Soldiers, the drill sergeants, better when they returned to the operational force.

The training methods he and the battalion commander used turned civilians into some of the best-trained Soldiers in the Army.

His impact on the future force is immense because he was always looking for ways to make the Army the best it could be, Andrews continued.

Lt. Col. Duane Patin, commander of 2nd Bn., 47th Inf. Regt., said, "He was a charismatic leader, who took great pride in his Family and his unit. He was the type of leader who improved any organization or Soldier who was fortunate enough to be led by him. We are at a loss without his friendship and consistent optimism. He will be missed."

Morgan is survived by his wife, five children and four grandchildren.

There will be a memorial service for Morgan at 1:30 p.m. April 1 in the Main Post Chapel.

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