



Sgt. First Class Gary J. Vasquez

November 12, 1974 - September 29, 2008

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Gary J. Vasquez, 33, of in Raeford, N.C, formerly of Highland, died Monday, Sept. 29, 2008, during combat operations while service with the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Afghanistan. Mr. Vasquez was one of three soldiers killed when his vehicle hit an enemy IED (Improvised Explosive Device), while conducting a combat reconnaissance patrol in the vicinity of Yakhchal, Helmand Province. Also killed were Capt. Richard G. Cliff Jr., 29, of Mount Pleasant, S.C. and Sgt. 1st Class Jamie S. Nicholas, 32, of Maysel, W.Va.

Mr. Vasquez was born on Nov. 12, 1974 in San Jose, Calif. On Oct. 14, 2006, he married Sarah Kramer of Chesterland, Ohio, a graduate of Notre Dame Cathedral Latin. She survives in Raeford, N.C.

Mr. Vasquez, a native of Highland, entered the U.S. Army in Jan. 2000 as a cavalry scout. After basic and advanced individual training at Fort Knox, Ky., he was assigned to Troop. A, 1st Battalion 17th Cavalry Regiment (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C. He began the Special Forces Qualification Course in 2002 and earned the coveted "Green Beret" in 2004, after which he was assigned to 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C., as a Special Forces Engineer Sergeant.

He was on his third tour of duty in Afghanistan. Known by his comrades as "the thespian" and

"the heart and soul" of the 7th Group, he was a friend to many, an admired brother, a loving son and the beloved husband. When Gary was deployed this past May in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Sarah had just moved the last of their belongings into their first new home.

Vasquez's military education included: the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course, Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course, Air Movement Course, Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Course, Basic Airborne Course, Warrior Leaders Course, Ranger Course and Special Forces Qualification Course. His awards and decorations include two Bronze Star Medals, two Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, two Army Good Conduct Medals, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, Ranger Tab and the Special Forces Tab.

Before his career with the United States Army, he graduated from Highland High School in 1992. While in high school, he played soccer and performed in school plays and musicals. He graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in theater from Illinois State University in 1996. But it was his perseverance to become a Green Beret that fueled his advancements within the military. His dedication and passion for his career was evident when he relayed stories about his missions, with a sparkle in his eye and a soft excitement in his voice. While his job required intense amounts of combat training, physical agility, and technical know-how, he possessed equal amounts of love for his mother, sister and brother, and dedication to his immediate family.

The hands that were so adept in the field were the same ones that cradled

babies with gentleness and hugged his nieces and nephews during visits with Sarah's family. When he wasn't deployed or on a training mission, he would spend time talking about and planning for his own family with Sarah. He said that if he could not work for the Army as a Special Forces sergeant, his "career" would be as a father to his own children. When asked as a newlywed when he and Sarah were going to start a family, he said with a beaming smile, "Now". He and his wife enjoyed hiking, rafting and playing with their dogs, Smash and Medea. Other survivors include, his mother, Margaret J. DuHasek of Highland; a brother, Barry W. DuHasek of Highland; and a sister, Keely M. Vasquez of Chicago.

He was preceded in death by his father, Frank Vasquez, a lieutenant colonel who served in Vietnam.

In lieu of flowers, please send in memorial donations to: The United Warrior Survivor Foundation (UWSF) In Memory of Sgt. 1st Class Gary J. Vasquez PO Box 181097 Coronado, CA 92178, or on-line at www.frogfriends.com. The UWSF is the only organization exclusively dedicated to serving the needs of the surviving spouses of Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine Corps Special Operations personnel killed in the line of duty since September 11, 2001. For more information about the UWSF or to make on-line donations, please visit their website at: www.uwsf.org. All donations will receive a tax deductible receipt. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to the family by visiting www.spengel-boulanger.com or by email at condolences@spengel-boulanger.com.

Tribute Wall



“ Gary was a student of mine at HHS. I will always remember him.

Taree McGee (Kostelac) - July 29, 2025 at 12:20 PM