



Sunday, November 15, 2009

Hundreds honor East Troy Navy pilot

Lt. Miller will be remembered by many

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Lt. Bret Miller

Flags at Wisconsin National Guard facilities, other government agencies, businesses and private residences across the state flew at half-staff on Saturday in honor of Lt. Bret Miller.

Miller, known for his trademark smile and dedication, was laid to rest on Saturday at Oak Ridge Cemetery in East Troy.

Hundreds of mourners remembered Miller during services Friday and Saturday at East Troy High School.

Miller, 30, died Oct. 28 of injuries received when the aircraft he was aboard crashed off the Gulf Coast of Texas during a training mission.

Miller and Lt. Joe Houston, 29, of Houston, were on board a Navy T-34C Turbomotor plane that went missing during a routine training mission.

The Coast Guard said it searched an estimated 131 hours and about 20,900 square miles for the two pilots.

An investigation of the incident is currently being conducted while the search continues for Houston.

Miller leaves behind a local legacy.

"He lived a life of distinction and honor earning the respect of all he encountered while finding the love of his life in Brianne (Voss) Miller," family members said in a prepared statement. "He will live on in the thoughts and memories of family and friends and in the lives of his children."

He was the son of Rick and Judy Miller of East Troy.

Miller has one son, Chase, with his wife Brianne of Elkhorn, who is expecting their second child.

Miller grew up in Eagle and graduated from East Troy High School in 1997.

"His high school years were a mere audition for the naval career that lay in front of him," family members said. "He had a passion for both academics and athletics."

He graduated with over a 4.0 grade point average and was considered one of the best basketball players in East Troy history.

Miller received a plaque when he graduated as East Troy's all-time leading scorer with 1,664 points.

In his East Troy career, Miller led the Trojans in scoring in three of his four varsity years and was named Southern Lakes All-Conference three times. Under Miller's leadership, the team won two conference championships and two regional championships, according to a May 28, 1997 issue of the East Troy News.

"The list of awards and accolades do not capture the true essence of Bret," according to the family. "He was a tireless worker with great discipline. He showed great poise on and off the athletic field and earned the trust and respect of his classmates."

Miller took his talents to the naval academy to play for the Division 1 Midshipmen in the Patriot League.

"Bret entered one of the most demanding and life-changing experiences that this world has to offer," his family said. "He did it with the full knowledge that he was putting his life on the line for the country he loved."

He graduated from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. in 2001. Upon graduation, he was accepted into the Naval Aviator Flight Program in Corpus Christi and received his wings in 2003.

Miller was then stationed in Jacksonville, Fla. where he completed his flight training, becoming a commander of a P3 aircraft.

Miller was deployed on two occasions while stationed in Jacksonville flying missions in Europe, Africa, Asia and South America.

In the summer of 2009, Miller made the decision to continue his career in the Navy and was set to transfer to Norfolk, Va. to serve on the USS Roosevelt.

He received the following awards while in service: Kosovo Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Armed Forces Service Medal, NATO Medal and Pistol Marksmanship Medal.

Those remembering his impact on the East Troy community do so with reverence.

"Bret Miller was an outstanding person. He had a positive impact on everyone with whom he interacted," said East Troy High School Principal Rick Penniston, who was Miller's basketball coach. "It was a great privilege to spend time with Bret, to be his basketball coach, and to be his friend. We feel a great sense of loss because he was such a special young man."

A Web site, Remember the Rangers, has been set up to honor the lives, service and families of the two pilots at www.remembertherangers.com.

On the site, family, friends, community members and strangers pay tribute to Miller's short but extraordinary life, remembering him as an all-star basketball player, Navy pilot, father, husband, son, friend and a man who sacrificed serving his country.

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