

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for letting me speak to you today. I'm not sure how formal this is supposed to be, but I appreciate the opportunity to tell you a little about my son Tom.

Tom was competitive as a young man, but wasn't quite sure early on what he wanted to do with his life. He knew one thing, he wanted to contribute in some way and help others. He explored opportunities at Wright State University and Toledo University, but it wasn't until he enrolled at Bowling Green State University and enlisted in their Army ROTC program that he really found what he was looking for.

One thing that helped was he met the love of his life there, Margo Maness, and everything was obvious from then on. They both graduated in 1992, were married, and as 2nd Lieutenants, began to fulfill their life's dreams. They had several postings in the United States and in the process began a family with two beautiful daughters, Alyssa and Ashley.

Tom's career flourished and he eventually achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He saw service all over the country, including the Pentagon, and spent time in training in Kuwait and 3 years in Italy. In 2005 he deployed to Afghanistan for a little over a year. It was not as tumultuous then, but still an uneasy time for us. He admired the Afghans that he worked with and felt our best chance in helping them to achieve their own democracy was to embrace their culture, understand their ways and use that knowledge to show how they could grow and prosper.

After his tour in Italy, he was assigned to the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in New York. The 10th Mountain Division has a long and storied history and was continuously a source of forces sent to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Tom was to be deployed to Afghanistan again with his unit in October 2010. Unknown to us at the time he was sent along with his friend and fellow officer, LTC Paul Bartz, for a briefing prior to the deployment. It was only to be for a week or so, so he didn't let us know he was going. On the morning of May 18th, at 8:30 in the morning in Kabul, a suicide bomber detonated his bomb, completely destroying the vehicle in which Tom was riding. Just like that he was gone.

Tom had three loves in his life, his family, his country and his God. He lived his life with honor and love for all three. His 18 years in the Army were such a rewarding and inspiring time for him. He took his oath and willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice as his duty to all he loved. He never wanted recognition. He just loved doing and giving, but never looked for anything in return. To see others content and fulfilled was reward enough for him. It wasn't just a commitment, it was a passion with him. As one of his officers said at his memorial, he not only ensured his men and women were well trained and prepared for any challenge, he made sure they had a quality personal and family life as well. He was a doer and a giver. Oh, and he would be angry with me if I didn't mention that he also loved his Ohio State Buckeyes. They went with him no matter where he went. Everyone who knew him soon knew his Buckeyes!

The highway that has been proposed to honor him was one he travelled many, many times. It often led him home. So I believe he would be very honored that you wish to memorialize him this way. Many in our community travel it regularly. They will remember Tom with their own personal memories and know that one of our own has fought and died for them.

Tom is one of thousands. Here in Ohio, he is one of 293 who have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. While Tom would be grateful for the honor you bestow on him today, he would want you to remember every day those who went before him and have fallen since.