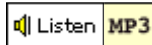


Texas soldier who lost life in Iraq remembered

by Catherine Cuellar, KERA 90.1 Reporter



IRVING, TX (2006-06-09)

Catherine Cuellar, reporter: After Adam Garcia's father Joe retired from the El Paso police department, his family moved to Irving 10 years ago. Garcia followed the Dallas Cowboys in training, literally - riding his BMX bike behind them as they ran in his neighborhood. He also started playing trombone in marching band during middle school, where he met his three closest friends - Brian Hecht, Chris Flowers, and Chandler Alstrin. Chandler's mom Jan Alstrin Bauman has a photo album at her desk, filled with images of Adam, from a round-faced boy

Jan Alstrin Bauman: There's Adam on the couch. This is them being silly in the car.

Cuellar: to a trim young man in uniform.

Bauman: I had started a tradition when we went to Adam's boot camp graduation. I put all four of them on the stairs and took their picture. So when Adam came home on leave I made them do the same thing in the exact same order.

Cuellar: During high school, Adam babysat Blake Cunningham's daughter, who was the same age as Adam's little sister Danielle. He also housesat when the Cunninghams went out of town. Cunningham, an Air Force veteran and Irving police officer, says Garcia was always responsible, and had new focus after 9/11.

Blake Cunningham, Irving police officer: I think he probably joined the military almost for the same reasons I joined the military. I couldn't get a job as a police officer until I turned 21. You can go in as early as 18, police training, with the military. Adam decided that's what he wanted to do, which I think took a lot of courage because at a time of war, when you join the military, it's a very serious thing. I think it was the path he felt drawn towards. I think he had an inner direction that sent him toward service.

Cuellar: Garcia was considered a well-rounded student at Coppell High School. In a corner booth at the local Dairy Queen, his chemistry teacher and mentor Kelly Hayes says they kept in touch after his graduation.

Kelly Hayes, assistant principal, Coppell High School: He gave me a handwritten letter when he graduated, just thanking me for getting to know him, being there for him, and one of the last things he said in that letter was, 'I hope I made you proud about the career choice that I made going to the military.' Of course, I keep that framed. I do know he was going to re-enlist this go-round and he was excited about that.

Cuellar: One reason Garcia wanted to re-enlist was to serve as a military police officer. Awaiting that assignment, and envisioning future work with a SWAT team, he worked as a combat engineer. When Garcia was fatally shot late last month in combat, his father Joe remembered a poem Adam had written for a class assignment three years earlier.

Joe Garcia: He stands alone in the shadow of fear/
He is leaving his friends and his family/
The thought of war in his mind not so clear/
For he has joined the United States Army/
And he must believe in himself strongly/
Because in war if he fights strong and dies/
It will be known that he fought bravely/
For death is the one thing he does despise/
And if he dies at home there his body lies/
They will pin his medals upon his chest/
And his mom will remember his brown eyes/
They will tell her he has done his very best/
By facing his fear his war has been won/
Now he can call himself an army of one

Cuellar: Adam's poem was distributed at his funeral last week. He was buried with full military honors at DFW National Cemetery.

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