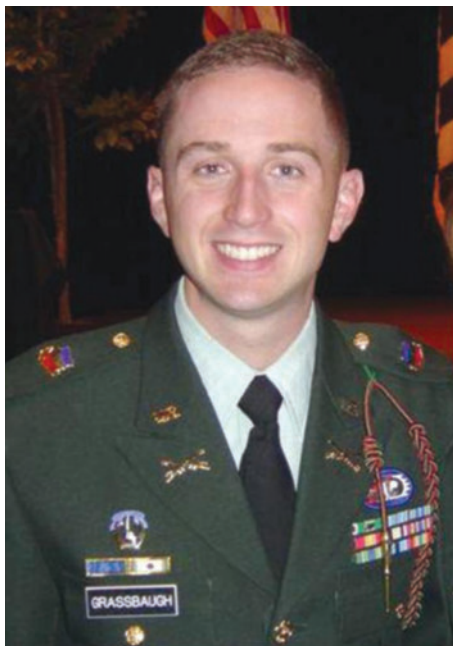


HONORING CAPTAIN JONATHAN GRASSBAUGH '99

In April came the sad news that Exeter had lost its first alumnus in the Iraq war. Army Captain Jonathan Grassbaugh '99, who was serving as an Army Ranger in Iraq, was killed by a roadside bomb on April 7.

Captain Grassbaugh came to Exeter from Hampstead, NH, as a day student, and during his four years here he was very active in WPEA, serving as the station's personnel director. He was also an admissions tour guide and a library proctor. From Exeter, he went on to Johns Hopkins University, where he joined the Army ROTC program. This was Grassbaugh's second tour of duty in Iraq. He was stationed at Fort Bragg, NC, and was a member of the 73rd Cavalry, 5th Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division. He leaves his wife, Jenna, also an Army Ranger, whom he married last summer, as well as his parents, Mark and Patti Grassbaugh, and his older brother and fellow Exeter alumnus, Army Captain Dr. Jason Grassbaugh '95.

On April 18, students and faculty gathered to honor Grassbaugh at a special assembly, which included the following tribute by his older brother, who is now in his fourth year as an orthopedic surgeon at the Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis, WA.



On April 18, students and faculty gathered for a special assembly honoring Army Captain Jon Grassbaugh '99, the first Exeter alumnus to die in the war in Iraq.

Twelve years ago, when I was sitting where you are, I dreamed of being asked to come back and speak after I'd cured cancer, spread democracy or made millions of dollars. I never expected to be back under these circumstances, and I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to come here and speak.

The Jon I remember observed little things and delighted in sharing them with all of us. One March night when I was home from college, Jon made our whole family go to Grainger Observatory at 1 a.m. We were all skeptical about this trip, but Jon delivered. He provided stunning views of Saturn's rings, a full moon and the nebulas he'd been studying in astronomy. Jon delighted in finding beauty around him and then sharing it with all the people that he knew.

In Iraq, Jon was a supply officer for a battalion, a unit of about 1,000 people. Over the past two weeks I've learned how Jon had achieved minor celebrity status in Iraq by getting hot pizzas delivered to his guys who were out in the mud. His guys consumed cases of an Iraqi energy drink called Wild Tiger as fast Jon could find ways to acquire it. The skills he learned here—looking closely at the people around him and then doing whatever they needed, whether they asked for it or not—are what made Jon a good officer in the Army and a better person. Ultimately, Jon died on a supply mission going to check on some of his guys at an outpost, making sure they had all the construction equipment that they needed to stay safe.

Someone asked me if I was angry that a hate group had decided to protest Jon's funeral. I am actually glad they are here, because it allows us to see the face of extremism and intolerance that we may be better prepared to identify and confront it in the future. You will all face hate and intolerance, and through those things people will be hurt and people will suffer. Ultimately, the tools that you will use to combat hate and intolerance will be your reason, your empathy and your compassion for other people. You already have all of these things. Just be sure to use them to make the world a better place for the people around you, one hot pizza at a time.

Jon didn't think there were many true moral dilemmas. He felt that if you had such a dilemma, you probably knew what was right inside. You just had to find the courage to act on it. My friends, your decisions in the future will have the ability to change the world and make it a better place. My brother strove to do that every day, to try to make the world a better place for the people near him.

If you take anything from here today, remember that if you observe the world closely, you will see how you can make it better. Let that be Jon's legacy to you: to make the world a better place.

— Army Captain Dr. Jason Grassbaugh '95