

Dear friends,

This past Saturday I had the opportunity to attend a flagpole dedication ceremony in honor of Army Sgt. Major Philip Albert; a Plymouth native whose life was taken from us in 2003 while in service to our country. The flagpole was dedicated by Tim Bobroske and the residents of Quail Hollow Village in Terryville.

Sgt. Major Albert was aboard a transport helicopter near Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan when engine failure brought the helicopter down injuring him and eight of his fellow soldiers. Albert, despite suffering serious wounds in the crash, brought three of the wounded soldiers to safety and while attempting to save a fourth, the helicopter exploded taking his life.

Albert joined the military after graduating high school and, as a veteran of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, was ready to retire from military service when the tragic events of September 11th inspired him to continue serving; a decision that led him to the ultimate sacrifice at the all-too-early age of 41.

The event on Saturday was simple, lasting no more than 15 minutes and gaining very little attention from newspapers and television crews. After all, Veterans Day 2009 had come and gone. But the simplicity of the event should not take away from its importance. Sgt. Major Albert, like many of his fellow soldiers, is a hero and deserves to be recognized as such. During his 22 year military career, he went to work protecting the very values that our nation was built upon, risking his life for freedom and asking for little in return.

The flagpole, dedicated by Tim Bobroske and the residents of Quail Hollow Village, was a wonderful tribute to a fallen hero, and a sober reminder that there are men and women making sacrifices for each of us everyday. I fully recognize there is nothing we can do to make up for the loss suffered by Sgt. Major Albert and his family but, if we keep his memory in our hearts and minds then we can allow his spirit to live on through each one of us.

When you have some time to spare during your busy day, take a trip to visit the flagpole at Quail Hollow Village and spend a few minutes thinking about all that it symbolizes. It is such a small thing to ask, but then again, we never had to ask our troops for anything.

William A. Hamzy  
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Deputy House Republican Leader