

Funeral set for Delmar man killed in Iraq

By Patricia M. Murrett, Capital News Service

WASHINGTON -- Last fall, Army Sgt. Thomas Lee Latham and his wife were faced with a tough decision: whether the infantryman, deployed to Iraq on stop-loss orders in August, should use his two-week annual leave coming home for Christmas, or save the time until later.

Today, Latham's wife, Rachel Guy-Latham, 22, of Delmar and family are grateful that the soldier wanted to share Christmas with his two young children, she said.

"Tommy Lee" Latham, 23, a Delmar native, was killed Sunday in Iraq by a roadside bomb. He was serving with Company "C" of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and deployed with them from Fort Drum, N.Y., in August as part of the infantry.

Funeral services in Salisbury at Emmanuel Wesleyan Church at 217 Beaglin Park Drive include public viewings between 6 and 9 p.m. Monday and on Tuesday between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Officiating at the 1 p.m. Tuesday funeral service with full military honors at the church are the Rev. Tom Bunting, Emmanuel Wesleyan pastor, and the Rev. Robert Gregory, assistant pastor at the Evangelicalistic Church in Delmar, who dedicated Latham as a baby.

A chapel service at Maryland Veterans Cemetery near Hurlock where Latham will be buried begins at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday.

The body of the 23-year-old infantryman was flown late Tuesday to Dover Air Force Base, Latham's mother-in-law, Florence Guy, said Wednesday. The family also was formally notified about noon Wednesday that Latham was unaware of a promotion from specialist to sergeant, according to Army Maj. Larry Brown, a casualty officer. Latham also earned the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart, which were awarded posthumously.

Following boot camp, he joined "B" Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, based in Hawaii, where he served as a rifleman and machine gunner. In 2004, he was deployed to a yearlong tour in Afghanistan.

Latham was supposed to leave the Army September 11, 2005, his mother-in-law said, but he was ordered to remain ready for redeployment. The soldier re-enlisted so he could return from Hawaii to be closer to his family before combat duty. He was sent to Fort Drum.

Latham and his wife, who met in seventh grade at Wicomico Middle School and remained friends throughout their years at Wicomico High School, married in April 2005.

"The military has kept them away from each other. They've been more apart than together," Florence Guy said.

His family said Latham enjoyed spending time with stepson, Caleb Guy, 5, and Ariel Latham, 21 months.

"He was the kind of Dad who would sit down with the kids and read the same books 10 times in a row," said Florence Guy, "get down on the ground, play Thomas the train. ... He just did a really good job with the babies, and it's really tragic that they're not going to have more memories with him."

Staff Writer Deborah Gates contributed to this story.

