

Thousands Pay Tribute to Fallen Hero

by K_Guice

More than 2,000 people gathered to pay tribute to Marine Lance Cpl. Randy Lee Newman, a 21-year-old Bend native who lost his life while serving his country in Iraq on August 20.

Family, friends, public figures and local citizens attended the public memorial at the Hooker Creek building at the Deschutes County Fair and Expo Center in Redmond on August 29 to remember the fallen hero.

More than 2,000 people honored Marine Lance Cpl. Randy Lee Newman at his memorial service Tuesday. Photo by Richard Burton. Presided over by Pastor Dan LeLaCheur, it was a heart-touching service set against a backdrop of photos of Marine Lance Cpl. Newman.

Family and dignitaries alike spoke about the great loss felt by his family, community and country.

“In his short life, he left a mark that will never be erased,” said Congressman Greg Walden.

That was a sentiment echoed by Gov. Ted Kulongoski. “Character tells us everything,” he said during the memorial. “Lance Cpl. Newman was the best Oregon had to give and we will miss him.”

Friends shared memories of Lance Cpl. Newman’s faith and famous smile. “One thing that was always with him was that grin,” J.W. Terry, the master chief with Mountain View's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) said.

If he had a chance to share one last thing with his friend, Terry said it would be simply to say, "You are outstanding and you are my hero."

During the memorial, not only was he celebrated as a hero, but honored for his sacrifice with the Purple Heart and Gold Star.

Outside of the memorial, the community and people from across the country gathered to pay their respects and support the Marine's grief-stricken family.

Photo by Richard Burton The streets of downtown Bend were lined with more than 100 American flags and residents.

Dozens of members of the Patriot Guard were also in attendance. The motorcycle riders are a diverse group of members that gather from across the nation at military services to both pay their respect and shield mourning loved ones from a protestor or group of protestors.

Westboro Baptist Church, a Kansas-based congregation known for protesting military funerals, had announced their intentions to protest Lance Cpl. Newman memorial service.

However, like the memorial for Army Pfc. Thomas Tucker in July, the group did not show up.

Shirley Phelps-Roper, the church's attorney and pastor's daughter said, "They had to divert to Salt Lake City." She went on to say, "An opportunity presented itself that we just couldn't pass up; Bush, veterans and a funeral, all in one place."

Lance Cpl. Newman was a member of 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, California.

He was deployed on his first tour in Iraq in March.

He graduated from Mountain View High School in 2003, where he was a member of the wrestling team and ROTC. Lance Cpl. Newman has two younger brothers.

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