

NCO Stories

A selection of Valor



The foundation of his sacrifice

By Sgt. Kandi Huggins
1st HBCT, 1st Infantry Div.

It's never easy to hear news of a fallen comrade.

"All I could do was stand there," said Spc. Rodolfo Moreno, recalling how he heard the news his brother-in-law and close friend, Sgt. Israel Devora-Garcia, was killed in Baghdad while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Maybe it's different being in the military and being around family and friends when we hear something like that, because we try to be a little stronger. But I know inside I was hurting badly," Moreno said. "I'll never forget that day. I got the call from a friend late at night on April Fool's Day, but of course, nobody jokes around like that."

That was six years ago



Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert DeDeaux

Spc. Rodolfo Moreno, a finance specialist with the 4th Financial Management Company, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, repaints the name of his brother-in-law, Sgt. Israel Devora-Garcia, Aug. 6, on the Warrior Memorial Wall at Contingency Operating Site Warrior, Iraq.



Photo by Spc. Jessica Luhrs-Stabile

On Sept. 11, 2010, a 280-foot wall was dedicated to over 4,000 fallen American warriors who had lost their lives in Iraq.

when Moreno, now a finance clerk with 4th Financial Management Company, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, received the news about Devora-Garcia.

Moreno deployed a year later to Iraq and felt it was his duty to serve and find a way to give back to the community in memory of Soldiers who sacrificed their lives while deployed.

“After he passed, I felt more obligated to be here and be with him because this is where he is now,” Moreno said.

Now on his second deployment to Iraq, Moreno had the opportunity to remember Devora-Garcia and other fallen heroes. He volunteered to help Spc. Faith Bedwell, a chaplain assistant with 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st AATF, and other service members touch up the names of fallen Soldiers painted on the Warrior Memorial Wall at Contingency Operating Site Warrior. The names, which have faded over the years, now include those who have given their lives in support of Operation New Dawn.

“When the decision was made to move the memorial wall to the center of COS Warrior, I felt it was our duty as fellow Soldiers to ensure the wall was complete by adding the names of those fallen during Operation New Dawn,” Bedwell said.

When Bedwell asked for volunteers, Moreno was enthusiastic and passionate about helping to honor his brother-in-law.

“Unless you’ve been in that position where you’ve lost someone on the wall, people don’t really understand the sacrifices,” he continued. “And for [the wall] to be there, it helps them understand. It makes you stop and think ‘that could’ve been me or that could’ve been my battle buddy.’”

A lot of time and effort went into painting the wall, and

Bedwell said it was their duty to not let the work go to waste.

“We are now able to hand over responsibility and bring closure to this war because of them, our fellow brothers and sisters,” Bedwell added. “If you take a look around, you will see the aftermath of the fights here, and around this area, and acknowledge that these guys were in the fight since OIF.”

Moreno also remembers Devora-Garcia, who was a scout with the 1st Armored Division, by giving back to his community through a foundation in honor of Devora-Garcia and other local fallen heroes.

Moreno said the foundation does a lot of charity events in raising money for kids to go to school and sponsoring meals around the holidays.

“People need some help every now and then,” he said.

Moreno said Devora-Garcia’s sacrifice brought a lot of patriotism to their hometown of Clint, Texas.

“We were from a small town, a farming community,” Moreno said. “We have veterans, but when Devora-Garcia [passed], we started getting more attention, military-wise, and people opened their eyes more in supporting troops.”

He said his community became more open-minded to what Soldiers were doing in combat zones, being away from their families, and taking their patriotism and commitment to their country to the next level.

“I’m proud of what I do and of his sacrifice. And not a day goes by where I don’t think about him,” Moreno said. “I just want people to know we’re still here and some of our comrades are going to be here forever because this is where they gave their lives.”