

THEY SERVED IN SILENCE



The Story of a Cryptologic Hero SGT Nicholas A. Robertson, USA

Philosophy, rightly defined, is simply the love of wisdom.

Marcus Tullius Cicero

During his short but accomplished life, SGT Nicholas A. Robertson of the United States Army was a devoted son, scholar, musician, and soldier. In his own heart of hearts, he was a committed student and proponent of the study of philosophy. It is clear that Nicholas would have agreed with Socrates that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Most importantly, during his time as both a student and soldier, SGT Robertson understood that philosophical concepts not only may help answer profound questions but also may encourage an individual to make the world a better place. Nick was one such person.

Nicholas Robertson hailed from the town of Holden in the beautiful “Pine Tree State” of Maine. His father noted that his son had a typical childhood. Nick was an above-average student who enjoyed playing the drums and spent his high school days doing the kinds of things teenagers like to do. His college years revealed a whole new world to him. After a short time at the local community college, Nick gained acceptance to the University of Maine. During his time at Lewiston he developed a passion for the subject of philosophy so strong that fellow students would marvel at his propensity for handing in 20-page papers for 5-page assignments. His passion and hard work earned him Phi Beta Kappa membership and numerous academic awards during his time at Maine. Professor Michael Howard of the university’s philosophy department noted that Nicholas was quite simply “one of the best students ever to go through our department.”

After graduation Nicholas applied and was accepted to Northwestern University graduate school. In May 2005, he decided, for both personal and practical reasons, to enlist in the United States Army. Joining the service allowed him to earn money to pay off his student loans as well as to pursue another of his passions, the study of language. In addition to his interest in philosophy at Maine, he minored in French and also studied German and Greek. In the Army, Nick opted for advanced training that took him to ranger, airborne, and language schools. In time he used his unique





skills in his combat training as a member of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) of Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

For centuries armies have been challenged by the harsh and unforgiving terrain of Afghanistan. Traditional methods are at times useless against the myriad asymmetrical tactics of the local tribesmen and insurgents. To fight and win in such an environment requires courage, bravery, and, in today's world, access to critical information. In his time spent in the crucible of war, Nick was known not only for using his soldier skills but also for employing his prodigious linguistic and cryptologic talents to provide and protect information on the front lines. As

a member of Special Operations Team Alpha he served as both a senior voice interceptor and cryptologic linguist. Nick became adept at detecting and acquiring foreign communications on the battlefield. It was in the use of these many skills and talents that he lost his life fighting for his country.

One of the tenets of existentialism, a subject of special interest to Nicholas Robertson, is that we as individuals, rather than philosophical or theological doctrines, create the meaning and value of our lives. During his life, whether he was helping a fellow student understand a difficult philosophical concept or fighting for his country on the harsh and unforgiving battlefields of Afghanistan, Nicholas Robertson used his talents and abilities to create a legacy of success and dedication that will be long remembered by his fellow soldiers and cryptologists. Through his rich, remarkable life and his many accomplishments, Nick showed that he was truly one of our nation's best in the classroom, on the battlefield, and, most importantly, in the hearts of his loving family and grateful fellow countrymen.



SGT Nicholas A. Robertson
24 May 1980 - 4 April 2008



Photos courtesy of the Robertson family

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MEMORIAL DAY 2009