

## CPL. BRAD PRESTON MCCORMICK

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Herald-Citizen Staff



(Photo: Brad with his parents, Keith and Gail McCormick)

An Overton County man serving in the U.S. Marine Reserves was killed in Iraq on Wednesday, military officials have told his family. **Brad Preston McCormick**, who would have been 24 on October 1, died in an explosion which injured several others, his family learned late yesterday.

Brad, a corporal in the Marine Reserves, is the husband of Courtney McCormick of Rickman and the son of Herald-Citizen Circulation Manager Keith McCormick and his wife, Gail, of Allons.

U.S. Marine officials went to the McCormick home in the Allons community of Overton County on Thursday afternoon with the news of his death.

Reportedly, the family was told that he died in an explosion while working a security/patrol detail in Najaf.

Cpl. McCormick was a 2000 graduate of Livingston Academy High School and a 2003 graduate of Tennessee Tech.

He and Courtney Curtis, daughter of Charles and Sharon Curtis of Rickman, married last December not long before his Marine Reserve unit, which was based in Nashville, was deployed for active duty in the war in Iraq.

He had been in Iraq since February and was scheduled to return to the United States in October.

While in Iraq, he had been able to phone his family periodically and reportedly had last called about three weeks ago, telling his father then that he and other Marines were about to be moved to another location in the war zone. Military restrictions would not allow him to disclose the details of that location, he said.

The news of Brad's death spread quickly through the Overton County community immediately after U.S. Marine vehicles were seen at the family's home on Thursday afternoon.

The family and their many friends, including the families of the Herald-Citizen, mourn the loss of a fine young man whose life held great promise.

He had earned his college degree in wildlife biology and had landed a job with the Tennessee Farmers Insurance Claims Dept. He was looking forward to coming home in another couple of months to take up his career again and to enjoy family life.

The Overton County community also still grieves the death of another of its sons in the Iraq war, Lance Cpl. Jeremiah Savage, 21, who died there in May.

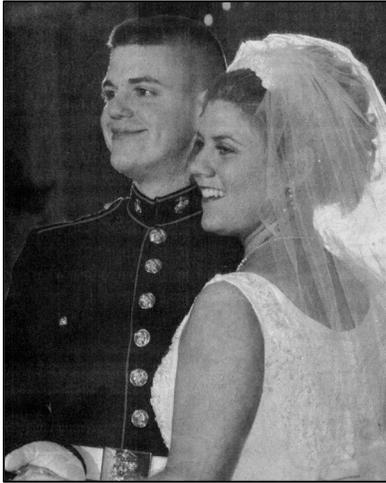
As of this morning, the McCormick family had received no detailed information on what happened to their son, nor information about when his body will be returned.

Funeral arrangements will be announced later.

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### **MARINE KILLED IN IRAQ AUGUST 18**

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U. S. Marine Corporal Brad McCormick of Rickman, killed in Iraq last week, will be laid to rest in Overton County on Thursday.

Funeral services, with full military honors performed by the U. S. Marines Honor Guard, for Cpl. McCormick, 23, will be held Thursday, August 26, at 3 p.m. in the gymnasium of Livingston Academy in Livingston. Brother Mark Loftis, Brother Marlon Winningham, and Brother A. J. Cox will officiate.

Burial will be in Netherland Cemetery.

Visitation will be held from 9 a.m. until the 3 p.m. service at the Livingston Academy gymnasium on Thursday.

Overton County Schools will be closed tomorrow in honor of Clp. McCormick, as his hometown pays tribute to his heroic service to

this nation.

*Photo: Brad McCormick and Courtney Curtis at their wedding, December 20, 2003.*

Cpl. McCormick was killed in action in Najaf, Iraq, on August 18, 2004. He was a member of the Marine Reserves I Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. He had been a Marine for four years and was deployed to the war last February.

According to information which has been given to his family, Cpl. McCormick was on assignment with other Marines to confiscate weapons in or near Najaf last Thursday when the vehicle they were in was hit by an explosive device.

The other Marines were seriously injured, and Cpl. McCormick, who was riding in the front seat, was killed instantly.

He was the husband of Courtney Curtis McCormick of Rickman and the son of Keith and Gail McCormick of Allons.

His family also includes his brother, Blake McCormick of Allons, and his grandmothers, Marie McCormick of Livingston and Willa Dean Seber of Allons.

He was preceded in death by his grandfathers, Loyd Seber and Arvis McCormick.

He was born in Putnam County on October 1, 1980.

He was a member of Netherland Church of Christ in Rickman, where he and Courtney were married last December.

He was an employee of the Claims Department of Tennessee Farmers Insurance Company.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Brad McCormick Memorial Fund at First National Bank of the Cumberlandands to benefit the U. S. Marines Toys for Tots program and the Netherland Church of Christ.

Honorary pallbearers will be Cpl. Jamie Greenwood, Cpl. Andy Ledbetter, Lance Cpl. Brandon Geesling, Derek Parsons, Bo Johnson, and K. L. Winningham.

Speck Funeral Home of Livingston is in charge of arrangements.

### **FAMILY MEMORIES OF A SON, A YOUNG FALLEN HERO**



Brad McCormick is being remembered as a happy, outgoing young man who was eager for the responsibilities of life, as well as for the joys.

His parents, Keith and Gail McCormick, have shared some of the special memories of their firstborn son with Overton County News reporter Dewain E. Peek, and Peek and reporter Becky Meredith published a story about their comments today.

From their story:

A happy little boy, Brad was always wanting to take things apart and put them back together again, his mother said.

"He loved tinkering with things. I used to get so aggravated with him when he was little. He just loved taking things apart, then trying to put them back together. He loved doing things with his hands.

"As he got older, he liked hunting and fishing, collecting guns and knives, riding his 4-wheeler, and playing golf."

At age 15, Brad got a job working at Hidden Valley Golf Course in Livingston and there continued his "tinkering" hobby by working on any malfunctioning lawn mowers or other machines, his mother said.

At Livingston Academy high school, Brad was involved in the 4-H Club and the Beta Club, and he played football for the Wildcats for two years. He graduated in 1998.

He later entered Tennessee Tech and worked at Winningham Hardware in Livingston part-time during those years, enjoying the hands-on work he could do at the store.

He was also developing during those years an interest in the military, his mother said.

"Brad had wanted to join the military at 17, but we wouldn't sign, no way.

"Then at 18, he said, 'I can do it myself.' But we told him no, told him to think about it a year. He talked about it during that year, and I would tell him he wasn't joining."

But in January of 2000, Brad came home one day and told her, "I've joined."

"It killed me," the mother said. "He had joined the Marine Reserves."

Brad trained at what is known as one of the toughest places in the military world: the U.S. Marine Recruit Depot in Parris Island, South Carolina. He also trained at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

As a member of the Reserves, he was able to continue civilian life while training during summer sessions and monthly drills.

He continued his education at TTU, majoring in Wildlife Biology and graduating in 2003.

Just out of school, he took a job with Tennessee Farmers Insurance, and he and his girlfriend, Courtney Curtis of Rickman, began to plan their wedding for the spring of 2004.

But when Brad learned in December that his Marine unit would be activated for service in the Iraqi war, the young couple moved their wedding date and married on Dec. 20 just a couple of weeks before he had to report to Camp Pendleton in California for training.

Brad and his fellow Marines left here for the California training in January of this year, and it was not until Valentine's Day weekend that Courtney could visit him there for a week just before the unit was sent to Iraq.

Once Brad was in the war zone, he kept in touch with his wife and his parents by phone as much as possible, often calling late at night or early in the morning.

"I can tell you that while he was there, he was ready to come home," his mother said.

"He hated the place. He was proud of what he was doing, but he didn't like that environment. Of course, I'm sure none of them do -- it's nothing pleasant. But he was proud of his branch of the military."

Brad had last phoned home on the morning of July 30, which happened to be the first day his mother, a teacher, had to be at school.

His call came right before she was about to leave for work, she said.

"I was thinking, 'I'm going to be late' But I didn't care. I decided to talk to him as long as he wanted. Every time he would call us, we would talk as long as he wanted to, and I wouldn't have dared to say, 'I have to go.' We always told him to call us early or late, to call us whenever."

Brad had last phoned his wife on August 17, his mother said.

"He told her he had gotten some kind of Navy and Marine achievement award, and they kind of had a little ceremony for him," his father said.

Brad had also previously been recognized with Marine of the Quarter awards and had recently mentioned to his wife that he was up for a promotion to sergeant, he said.

Now a hero to the nation he served, Brad had already long been a hero to his little brother, Blake, who is now 13.

Their mother recalled a 4-H Club speech the younger boy gave once on the subject of his big brother.

"At the end of the speech, he held up Brad's picture and said that if he could be like anybody, he wanted to be like his brother."

Brad was a happy person who was always smiling and joking, his father said.

"He never met a stranger. Everybody liked him."

"He was my inspiration," his mother said. "We would tell him, 'Brad, you are number one, our hero.'"

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