

Port Washington Youth Activities

PYA SPORTS HALL OF FAME

SGT. JAMES J. REGAN



PYA honors James J. ("Jimmy") Regan as the first Manhasset player from the combined PYA/Manhasset PBC intramural football program to be recognized in our Hall of Fame. He played in the program for 5 years in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

In his brief life, he did not choose the predictable, cushy jobs his background and ability afforded him. In February 2007, Regan, at age 26, gave his life for his country. He was a United States Army Ranger and was killed in northern Iraq, having already served four tours of duty - - two in Afghanistan and two in Iraq. A fellow Army Ranger recalled, "James Regan was the guy you want next to you at all times."

Jimmy was born on June 27, 1980, the same year his family bought their first home in Manhasset, and he attended Munsey Park Elementary and Manhasset Middle School where he played lacrosse, football, and basketball in the PAL and CYO sports leagues.

In 1998, he graduated with honors from Chaminade High School. Jimmy distinguished himself that same year as an All-American Lacrosse Player, an All-State Scholar/Athlete in Football, and the winner of the Nassau County Sports Commission Award for Outstanding Academic Achievements, Athletic Achievements, and for Service to his Community.

Duke University recruited Jimmy on a lacrosse scholarship. As a midfielder with the Blue Devils, he helped Duke win the ACC Championship in 2001 and 2002, and reach the NCAA Final Four in 2002. Intensely competitive and fiercely determined, Jimmy was always considered to be the best prepared player on the field. His professors, teachers and commanders would agree that he focused with laser-like intensity to be the best. Jimmy earned a degree in economics with minors in business and marketing at Duke, but upon graduating, he turned down a job offer from UBS (where he had interned), and a scholarship to Southern Methodist University's law school, to join the Army Rangers.

Jimmy enlisted in February 2004. He was acutely impacted by the September 11 attacks, having been raised in a town where over 20 individuals who perished in the attacks had lived. He turned down an opportunity to attend Officers Candidate School because, "it would slow down my ability to join the Rangers." With a desire to be on the fast track to serve his country; he wanted to be a Ranger - - a highly trained and rapidly deployable light infantry force with specialized skills to engage in special operations.

His family and community had instilled in Jimmy an unwavering commitment to his country and he took this commitment seriously. Once, as they discussed his decision to join the Rangers he asked his fiancée, Mary McHugh, a medical student at Emory University, "If I don't do this who will?" He believed that he was blessed with talents and intelligence to be of service to his country.

At Infantry Basic Training, Jimmy graduated first in his class of 400 in May 2004, earning the "Soldier of the Cycle" distinction. Eventually he graduated the Ranger Indoctrination Program's Basic Airborne Course and was selected and assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, at Fort Benning, GA. Jimmy also attended the elite Ranger School and was assigned a team leader position. As he left for his fourth Tour of Duty to Iraq in January, 2007 he was promoted to Sergeant/E5. His vehicle was struck by an IED while conducting combat operations in northern Iraq on February 9.

Jimmy's awards and decorations include the Army Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, and Parachutist Badge and Ranger Tab. He was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart.

Jimmy's plans upon leaving the service had included a March 2008 wedding to Mary, and getting a master's degree in education. In addition to his fiancée, Jimmy is survived by his parents, James and Mary, three sisters, Maribeth, Colleen and Michaela, and his grandfather John Desmond.

Jimmy was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. Of all of the proud PYA HOF honorees from these last 17 years who he now joins, Sgt. James J. Regan alone is considered a true American Hero.

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