

Procession Of Police Cars Honors Fallen Minnesota Soldier



AP Photo/Jim Mone

Children from Morris Elementary School line the road holding flags and roses as a procession of police cars goes by enroute to the church for the funeral of Staff Sgt. David Day, Thursday, March 3, 2005 in Morris, Minn. Day, one of three Minnesota National guardsmen killed in Iraq, was a police officer in St. Louis Park, Minn.

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[*West Central Tribune*](#) via the Associated Press

MORRIS, Minn. (AP) -- Two by two, a procession of 110 squad cars with lights flashing drove slowly and silently through this western Minnesota city.

A Blackhawk helicopter flew over the procession, flying low enough to create a stir of dust.

And when a white hearse carrying Staff Sgt. David Day drove by, people laid down pink, red and peach roses on the streets of Morris in tribute to a Minnesota soldier who laid down his life last week in Iraq.

Day, 25, a Morris native who was a St. Louis Park police officer, was one of three members of the same Minnesota National Guard unit who were killed by a roadside bomb Feb. 21 in Baghdad. Separate funerals were held earlier in the week for 1st Lt. Jason Timmerman, of Tracy, and Sgt. Jesse Lhotka, of Alexandria. Gov. Tim Pawlenty and first lady Mary Pawlenty attended all of the funerals.

After the procession passed Thursday, the crowd dissipated, leaving a line of roses behind them.

"It kind of just overwhelms you, there's so much support here," said Carolyn Smith, who held an American flag.

Day, the youngest child of David and Vicki Day, was remembered as a hardworking, good-humored and courageous young man.

An estimated 1,000 people packed Assumption Catholic Church for Day's funeral. Their ranks included more than 250 law enforcement members from 70 agencies, including 65 from the St. Louis Park police department, which swore in Day in February 2004, and the staffs of the Morris police and Stevens County sheriff's departments. Day had also worked as a community service officer in Morris.

Seating and closed-circuit televisions were set up in the church basement and at St. Mary's School to accommodate the large numbers.

The Rev. Alan Wielinski shared family stories about Day and reiterated that Day had "laid down his life for his friends." The three soldiers were killed while coming to the aid of injured comrades.

"The selfless service of David, and countless other soldiers like him, gives witness to some of the very best of human qualities: courage, faithfulness, selflessness, steadfastness, loyalty and love unto death," he said.

Stevens County Sheriff Randy Willis said Day was a "great kid."

"A lot of people are liked. A lot of people are respected. But it's hard to be both," Willis said. "He pulled it off."

Capt. Kirk DiLorenzo of the St. Louis Park Police Department worked with Day for two years. He stood on the church steps while Day's coffin was brought in and out.

"All of the officers are heartbroken," he said.

Day married his longtime girlfriend, Amy Gulbrandson, 12 days before his deployment in October. Sgt. 1st Class James Howe was Day's first sergeant and knew Day for about five years.

"He's not only a good soldier, but a good individual, a great person," Howe said before the funeral. "The kind of guy you'd want your daughter to marry."

Before the procession, Brian Brummond, of Morris, spoke of his "very hard emotions." His son, Joshua, 23, is in Day's unit _ the Montevideo-based 151st Field Artillery _ and was assigned to gather the personal belongings of Day, Timmerman and Lhotka to be sent back home.

"He said it was one of the hardest things he's had to do," Brummond said.

There are two memorial funds set up for Staff Sgt. David Day. Donations can be sent to Bremer Bank, 701 Atlantic Ave., Morris, MN 56267 or Citizens Independent Bank, 5000 W. 36th St., St. Louis Park, MN 55416.