

# Corporal Jonathan Bowling

Benjamin Disraeli said, “The legacy of heroes - the memory of a great name, and the inheritance of a great example.” There have been countless military members that have put their lives on the line for our tomorrows. Their stories and legacies inspire our country and remind us to be thankful for our freedoms. One fallen soldier in particular has influenced me and many others in my community. Corporal Jonathan Bowling was from Patrick County, Virginia. He attended Patrick County High School, participated in the ROTC program, and joined the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve after graduating in 2000. In 2002, he joined the Martinsville Police Department after earning a degree in criminal justice from Patrick Henry Community College. He also worked as a volunteer firefighter. In May 2004, Bowling was sent to California with his unit. Later in August 2004, they were sent to Iraq. On January 26, at about three o’clock in the morning, his convoy was hit by a rocket grenade attack. Jonathan Bowling died from injuries sustained during that attack. Jonathan Bowling’s sacrifice had a significant impact on the small county and the individuals who resided there. He left behind a clear example of generosity, courage, and kindness, a message and reminder of positivity and sacrifice, and a wide legacy that is still being continued today.

Jonathan Bowling was a distinct model of courage, honor, and overall kindness for Patrick County. After news of his death, nearly 5,000 locals came to pay respects to his family. The funeral home did not have enough room so they moved his coffin to the auditorium of Patrick County High School, where he had graduated from just five years earlier. The following day, many local businesses were not open, and people lined the streets as the hearse passed by. Mary Alley, owner of the Coffee Break, said, “You spend all those years watching a kid grow

into someone you're proud to have around, and just like that, he's gone, in the blink of an eye” (Morello). Bowling had affected many lives, not only through his life-changing profession, but through the actions he took when no one was watching. He worked in his church frequently, visited elders in his neighborhood, and helped older people load groceries into their cars. Even when his father, Darrell Bowling, a state trooper, reminded him that he could get Jonathan reassigned to another military unit that might be less dangerous, Jonathan refused. His father described Jonathan feeling like serving in Iraq was his duty, no matter how life-threatening it could be. Jonathan Bowling, whether he was serving in the military or simply being a helping hand, was the epitome of a good person.

When Jonathan Bowling left for Iraq, he knew that it was a possibility that he wouldn't be returning. Before leaving, he had written a letter detailing instructions for the distribution of his possessions and his funeral. The end of the letter was a message of love for his family. “I love you both very much, and just know that I am at peace. So try not to cry, and look forward to the future” (Adams). The last thing Jonathan Bowling left for his family in the midst of his death was a letter, not of sadness or mourning, but of optimism and peace, possibly the best gift he could leave for his grieving family.

Each spring there is a motorcycle ride in Jonathan Bowling's honor. This serves as a way to show respect for Bowling and raise money for the scholarship named in his memory, Corporal Jonathan W. Bowling Scholarship Fund. Every year, a Patrick County student receives funding from this scholarship, particularly students who look to go into public service. This is a great tribute to Bowling's memory and a good way to demonstrate his love towards his community.

Corporal Jonathan Bowling was a generous, hard-working, honorable, and kind military member, neighbor, friend, son, and brother. He meant so much to many people in Patrick County.

His loved ones have carried on his legacy and told his story of heroism, duty, and sacrifice. For friends who have asked how they could show support and love for Jonathan's family, Darrell Bowling, his father, had one request. "As you sit or stand or walk or run through whatever time you have left here on this earth, from time to time, close your eyes and think of him. And as he whispers by, reach out and touch him, and hold him, and comfort him and love him" (Adams).

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