

**Staff Sgt. David G. Bellavia** was born, Nov. 10, 1975, in Buffalo, New York.

The son of a successful dentist and the youngest of four boys, Bellavia grew up in western New York and attended Lyndonville Central High School and Houghton Academy.

Following his high school graduation in 1994, Bellavia attended Franklin Pierce University in Rindge, New Hampshire, and the University at Buffalo, where he studied biology and theater before turning to the military.

Bellavia enlisted in the U.S. Army as an infantryman in 1999. After One Station Unit Training, the Army assigned Bellavia to the Syracuse Recruiting Battalion; an assignment which allowed his infant son to receive the medical care he needed. In 2001, Bellavia had to choose between changing his military occupational specialty, submitting a hardship discharge, or remaining as an infantryman and leaving his family for 36 months on an unaccompanied tour to Germany.

After the terror attacks on 9/11, Bellavia felt his country needed him and chose to stay and fight. That sense of duty had been ingrained in Bellavia since he was a child by his grandfather, Joseph Brunacini, who served in the Army during the Normandy Campaign in World War II and earned a Bronze Star for his valor.

In the summer of 2003, Bellavia's unit deployed to Kosovo for nine months before receiving orders to deploy directly to Iraq to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. From February 2004 to February 2005, Bellavia and the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, were stationed in the Diyala Province along the Iranian border. Throughout the year, his task force took part in the battles for Najaf, Mosul, Baqubah, Muqdadiyah and Fallujah.

Bellavia left the Army in August 2005 and cofounded Vets for Freedom, a veteran advocacy organization that sought to separate politics from the warriors who fight in the field. Their membership consisted of tens of thousands of veterans who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bellavia returned to Iraq as an embedded reporter in 2006 and 2008 where he covered the heavy fighting in Ramadi, Fallujah and Diyala Province. In 2007, he wrote a book, House to House, detailing his experiences in Fallujah. He also had several articles appear in national publications and made appearances as a guest on cable news networks. Bellavia currently is a successful business owner and a loyal Buffalo area sports fan.

Bellavia's awards and decorations include the Medal of Honor, Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Achievement Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Good Conduct Medal with Bronze Clasp and two Loops, the National Defense Service Medal, Kosovo Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, New York State's Conspicuous Service Cross, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon with Numeral "2," the Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon with Numeral "2," the Presidential Unit Citation, Combat Infantryman Badge, Driver and Mechanics Badge and the NATO Medal. He was inducted into the New York State Veterans Hall of Fame in 2005.

Staff Sgt. Bellavia currently resides in western New York and has three children.