

Mike Sonoda Jr.

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Sergeant

A Company, 1st Battalion

184th Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division

U.S. Army/Army National Guard

July 1, 1971 – Sept. 22, 2006

Fallbrook, California



Most who have served in the active duty military, leave after they have completed their first enlistment to pursue goals they envisioned for themselves in the civilian world. Out of those, a small percent serve again on a part-time basis by joining the Reserves or the National Guard. They do so for the adventure, patriotism and because they miss the camaraderie that only exists between those who have put on a military uniform. This is what Mike Takeshi Sonoda Jr. chose to do.

Mike was born and raised in the San Diego County town of Fallbrook. He was the grandson of San Joaquin Valley tomato and strawberry farmers whose families were forced into Japanese American concentration camps during WWII. As a teenager Mike enjoyed video games, science fiction, anime and manga. He attended Fallbrook High School and graduated in 1989. His younger sister Irene described him as “very caring and generous, inquisitive and dedicated.”

Mike joined the U.S. Army in 1995 and served as a parachute rigger and a paratrooper in the 325th Parachute Infantry Regiment stationed in Vicenza, Italy. A rigger’s job is to precisely pack and prepare parachutes for airborne personnel and equipment. The responsibility is tremendous.

After completion of his enlistment and returning to civilian life, Mike became a hazardous material specialist for the U.S. Postal Service. His desire to return to military service on a part-time basis led him to join a National Guard unit, A Company, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division, headquartered in Fullerton, CA. The unit was activated for full-time service and deployed to Iraq in January, 2005. A major in the 184th Infantry said of Mike, “Sonoda often was the first to volunteer for patrols. He was the kind of guy the younger soldiers would look up to and the older sergeants could rely on. He was a real spirit of the platoon.”

Specialist Mike Sonoda Jr. died in Baghdad, Iraq of injuries sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near his armored personnel carrier on September 21, 2005. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Sergeant Sonoda’s awards include the Parachute Badge, Parachute Rigger Badge, Italian Parachute Badge, Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal.