

## Leave the World a Better Place

Mark Norman Stubenhofer came to Clemson from Springfield, Virginia on an ROTC scholarship. During his senior year, he met Patty. A history major in the Class of 1996, Stubenhofer was commissioned into the Army as a second lieutenant and reported for active duty after graduating. Mark and Patty were married in October 1997.



Stubenhofer's first assignment was to Fort Richardson, Alaska. While there, Patty gave birth to their daughter Lauren. An assignment to Fort Benning, Georgia was followed in 2001 with a transfer to Fort Riley, Kansas where he was assigned to the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. The couple's second child, son Justin, was born at Fort Riley.

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Stubenhofer deployed three times in four years. He went first to Kuwait then, in 2003, to Iraq. While in Iraq, Stubenhofer was awarded the Bronze Star.

His third deployment—once again to Iraq—came just weeks before Patty was due to give birth to their third child. In a 2021 interview, Patty recalled that shortly after the baby was born, “the nurse came running in, ‘it’s her husband! It’s her husband!’” Somehow Mark had gotten the hospital’s number and called from Iraq. Patty held the phone up to their new daughter’s ear so she could hear her father’s voice. “He was there as much as he could be,” Patty said. It was as close as Mark Stubenhofer would come to the little girl named Hope.

By this time, Captain Stubenhofer's focus on the positive aspects of life was making a lasting impact on the soldiers he served with. “Anyone who had the privilege of knowing the Stubenhofers while they were waiting for Hope's arrival knows all about the reasons her name would be Hope,” recalled Jennifer Freeman. “Captain Stubenhofer could not stop talking about his hopes.”

"Mark had one of the most positive attitudes of any officer I have served with," wrote Stephen Schnell. Sergeant Osmin Rivera remembered his company commander as an “outstanding Officer, Soldier, human being.” Clemson acquaintance Steve Gillingham noted that Stubenhofer “could see the big picture of the world and he wanted to leave it a better place than he came into it. He was a great patriot willing to put country above self.”

Stubenhofer was described as a mentor and a fine commander, and also as someone with a keen eye for detail. “Mark was a born debater, and he could outsmart you. You could never win,” his mother recalled. He would even challenge high-ranking officers. Sallie Stubenhofer said one of her son's superiors told her about a lengthy meeting that was wrapping up. When he asked for final questions, Stubenhofer looked up and pointed to

one overlooked detail. Her son, the commander told her, was always right. “He said it drove him nuts. I said, ‘Tell me about it. I raised him.’”

On December 7, 2004, well into his second tour of duty in Iraq, Captain Stubenhofer was leading a patrol in Baghdad. He was killed by small arms fire. He never made it home to meet his daughter, Hope.

In addition to the Bronze Star, Captain Stubenhofer was awarded the Purple Heart. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. The US Post Office in his hometown of Springfield, Virginia was renamed in his honor.

