UB honor student from Blasdell to be cited for rescue in Iraq

Bronze Star will be presented at football game against Army

By Lou Michel NEWS STAFF REPORTER
Updated: 10/17/08 8:27 AM

When Robbie Lee Flowers steps onto the University at Buffalo football field Saturday, he will be a long way from the battlefield in Iraq.

The 27-year-old Blasdell man will be awarded a Bronze Star with “V” attachment for valor for helping save two soldiers who were engulfed in flames after a roadside bomb destroyed their Humvee in Baghdad last year.

With Army’s Black Knights football team playing the UB Bulls on homecoming at the North Campus stadium in Amherst, the setting could not be better for the presentation of the medal to the ROTC cadet.

There’s just one thing: Flowers, who is also an Army enlisted medic and UB honor student, says he does not feel like a hero.

“It’s always tough to receive an award when people did lose their lives. In the end, the real heroes are the people who paid that final sacrifice,” he said of two other soldiers who died from burns suffered in the March 2007 attack.

Details of how Flowers, a husband and father of two children, performed as a medic leave no doubt that he demonstrated uncommon courage when his convoy came under attack.

“The IED struck the fuel cell of the Humvee, and everyone inside that Humvee was engulfed in flames,” he said, referring to an improvised explosive device. “Me and some of the other personnel immediately dismounted our vehicles and went to help. Guys were jumping off the Humvee engulfed in flames.”

As Flowers and the other soldiers approached the burning vehicle, grenades and other ammunition inside started exploding. Despite the danger, Flowers and a second soldier pulled a gunner with two broken legs into a doorway for cover, after another soldier using a fire extinguisher put out flames burning their comrade.

Flowers provided first aid to the gunner and then helped a second soldier who had been severely burned. When the smoke cleared, three soldiers had been wounded, one died at the scene, and a second died later.

Flowers, originally from North Carolina, returned to the United States in August 2007 and is now in his senior year at UB as a double major in sociology and community mental health.

He maintains a 3.99 grade-point average and modestly says he “tries” to do his best at school. When he graduates in the spring from UB and the Canisius College ROTC program, he will be commissioned as a second lieutenant.

The festivities begin at 3:15 p. m. Saturday with the West Point Army Spirit Band performing. (The band also will perform at 4:30 p. m. today in Freedom Hall, Room 301, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, 3495 Bailey Ave.)
“Everyone seems to be pretty excited. It’s homecoming, and I guess it’s been awhile since Army played UB,” said Flowers, happy to deflect the attention from him.

But at the end of the game’s first quarter, he will be called onto the playing field for presentation of the medal.

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