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As Soldier Dies in Iraq, Father Loses 'Best Friend'

Sergeant From Va. Is Killed in Hawijah

By *Martin Weil*
Washington Post Staff Writer
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When Forrest D. Cauthorn graduated from high school in Virginia, his dad gave him a motorcycle. The idea was for him to ride all summer, crisscrossing the country while he decided what to do with his life.

But what the father did not know was that his son had already made his decision. He had joined the Army.

On April 5, Sgt. Forrest D. Cauthorn, 22, an infantryman from Charles City, Va., was killed in Iraq, the Pentagon said.

He died in Hawijah of wounds suffered when his unit encountered enemy forces using small arms and grenades, according to the Pentagon.

"My best friend," his father, Forrest W. Cauthorn, called him last night. "The best thing I've ever done in my life."

The two had always been close, his father said. In 22 years, the elder Cauthorn said, his son "lived more than most people" do in a lifetime.

"We were always together," including time the son spent "riding with me on the back of my motorcycle," Cauthorn said.

The younger Forrest Cauthorn had a positive outlook, his father said. He was "a unique person" who made no enemies and fit in with people far older than he. "Even my old biker friends," the father said.

Rather than be content to complain about the country's problems, Cauthorn said, his son wanted to help solve them.

"He told me point-blank that he was not going to be one of those people" who express displeasure but refuse to act, the father said.

Telling his son's story was important, Cauthorn said, because it lets others know "what good kids do and what price they paid."

Forrest D. Cauthorn, who was known by his middle name, Dane, attended Manchester High School in Midlothian, Va., a suburb west of Richmond. He was a member of ROTC throughout high school, said Sgt. Maj. William J. Wilderman, an instructor in the program.

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