



Pensacola, FL
Silver Star Medal

Sergeant Frederick Rowell

For some, bravery and courage is rooted so deep, the heroic becomes almost common place. Sergeant First Class Frederick Rowell exemplifies this fine character trait.

Sergeant First Class Frederick Rowell of the United States Army was deployed to Iraq for two tours, both of which took place during some of the most pivotal moments of that ongoing campaign, and both times he distinguished himself with valor and heroism.

In the "blitzkrieg" invasion of Iraq, then-Sergeant Rowell was involved in the critical fight for the Baghdad International Airport. April 4, 2003 was the first great test of this young non-commissioned officer's dedication to his fellow soldiers. After dismounting its Bradley fighting vehicle, Rowell's unit came under heavy automatic and rocket-propelled grenade fire. After assessing the severity of the fire, Rowell covered his comrades as they fell back to their Bradley when he noticed another squad was pinned down far from cover and taking heavy fire. Once his own squad was in the relative safety of its armored vehicle, Rowell did not hesitate to act.

Charging across open terrain under the aim of Iraqi forces, Rowell arrived at the scene of the isolated squad to find it without leadership and one soldier severely injured. Rowell sprang into action, laying down cover fire and applying first aid to the injured private. As the enemy attack became more focused and more intense, Rowell threw himself on top of the soldier, using his own body as a shield while a rescue vehicle closed in on their beleaguered position. Rowell took a direct hit from an AK-47 round in his back, luckily stopped by his body armor – a round that would have almost certainly killed the private under Rowell. With the evacuation vehicle blocked from coming any closer, Rowell hoisted the wounded private onto his back and ran some 100 meters to save the injured soldier.

With the "Surge" operations intensifying in Iraq in September of 2007, Rowell, now a Staff Sergeant, was in charge of a squad on a scouting mission to observe insurgent activity in a volatile part of Baghdad. His squad – split into two observation posts in two buildings – came under fire from multiple directions.

As enemy fire poured in on them, Rowell planned to move his team to the other observation post, but as the first soldier was severely injured by an IED as he stepped out of the door. Rowell was knocked unconscious by the blast, but regained his focus – despite being later diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury – and rose to his feet, running to the aid of his comrade. Under heavy fire, Rowell pulled the man back into the building and defended him from the numerous attackers. With a group of Stryker combat vehicles arriving on the scene, Rowell helped evacuate the wounded soldier, directed the reinforcements to the enemy positions. On the way out of the kill-zone, Rowell manned the roof gun on the Stryker as they evacuated the injured to a combat hospital.

In these two events, Rowell's heroism was undeniable. By ignoring his own safety and using his body as a shield to protect a wounded soldier in 2003, he earned the Silver Star. For coming to the aid of another wounded soldier and displaying steadfast courage under harrowing fire in 2007, he earned the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

