

Marine who threw himself between grenade and comrades mourned

Associated Press

SCIO, N.Y. — Mourners Saturday filled one of Cpl. Jason Dunham's favorite places — his high school gym — for the funeral of the Marine, who died in Iraq after using his own body to shield his men from an attacker's grenade. The gym, packed with more than 1,500 people, is the largest gathering space in the upstate New York town of Scio, where Dunham grew up. His casket rested beneath a basketball hoop.

Dunham, 22, died from wounds he sustained April 14 in Iraq. A report from the Marine Corps said Dunham was commanding a check point near Karbala when a man got out of a car and tried to flee. Dunham tackled the man, who then pulled a pin from a hand grenade. Dunham dove onto the grenade before it exploded, the Marines reported. Two other Marines were injured. Dunham, with K Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, was remembered in Iraq on Thursday at a service attended by more than 500 Marines, sailors and soldiers, the Marines reported.

Dunham “never judged anyone and he never judged the people over there,” friend Justin Lambert said at Saturday's funeral. “He was just doing his job. He's going to be missed.”

As a long procession of cars and walkers accompanied the casket to the nearby cemetery, Scio residents sat on their porches and children lined the sidewalk. An American flag was draped above the highway.

Dunham's parents, carrying the tri-folded flag that had draped their eldest son's coffin, and their three younger children were escorted by the Marines to an awaiting car.

“The Marine Corps have really showed us how much this means to them,” said Cpl. Dunham's father, Dan. “They've been very good to us.”