

THEY SERVED IN SILENCE

The Story of a Cryptologic Hero
SSG Edwin H. DazaChacon, USA

A man who had become what he could and what he was----

*Ready at any moment to gather everything
into one simple sacrifice.*

Dag Hammarskjold

From our nation's inception, in times of war and peace, there have always been individuals who have had the courage and resolve to defend freedom under difficult circumstances. SSG Edwin Herbert DazaChacon was such an individual. Edwin was born in Colombia, South America, thousands of miles away from the United States. Ironically, he would enter the world on July 4th, the hallowed birthday of the nation he would one day defend. Seven years earlier on a cold winter morning in 1960, an American president on his first day in office had reminded all Americans, *"In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty."*

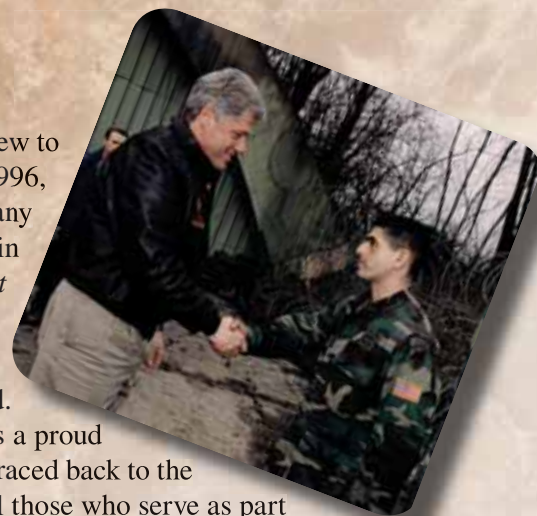
As a young man, Edwin would immigrate to America. From his earliest days he would demonstrate an immense passion for life. Some would call him a true Renaissance man. Edwin loved all forms of music, history, and poetry. He was also uniquely talented in the areas of dance and the culinary arts. But as devoted as Edwin was to these pursuits, nothing could ever match the love he had for his family and friends. At the same time, however, Edwin had a bold and adventurous streak. As a child, he was fascinated with his cousin, a Colombian paratrooper. His sister Jessica Annette once noted that, *"Even when he was three or four years old, he was wearing an airborne hat. That was the man he was going to become."* This unique combination of toughness and sentimentality would serve him well in the years to come. His sister Monique Francesca fondly remembers her brother as, *"The man with the soul of a warrior and the heart of a troubadour."* In time, Edwin would bring his talents to the U.S. Army and nobly answer his adopted country's call to the colors.

During the first Gulf War, Edwin would fight with the 82nd Airborne. As a paratrooper in the famous All American Division, he would serve with distinction and develop a host of lifelong friendships. Later, he would participate in peacekeeping duties in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1997, he concluded his initial enlistment, entered civilian life, and joined the Army Reserve. Edwin would remain a civilian until shortly after the attacks on our nation on the morning of September 11, 2001.

After the crucible of 9/11, Americans everywhere experienced a wide range of emotions and reactions. Edwin's response to the attacks was to volunteer once again for active duty. At the time, he told his sister that he intended *"to do something instead of*



sitting back and criticizing". Being an upbeat and proactive person was nothing new to Edwin. He had always made it a point to accentuate the positive side of life. In 1996, President Clinton paid a visit to the U.S. military forces in Bosnia. At the time many of Edwin's fellow soldiers had been less than anxious to greet the commander in chief, but Edwin told a *Washington Post* reporter, "It's good to see the leader out here asking about our needs. That's true whether the leader is the lieutenant or the president. And it's especially important for very young soldiers."



Anyone who serves in our nation's armed forces is to be honored and admired. But it must be said that SSG Edwin DazaChacon was not just any soldier. He was a proud member of the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), a unit whose lineage can be traced back to the early days of WWII and was once known as the "Devil's Brigade". To this day, all those who serve as part of America's Special Forces are consistently called upon to be innovative, versatile, and resourceful in their work.

Like most members of his unit, Edwin had an array of talents. In addition to his infantry skills, he was adept at helping his fellow soldiers to win the equally important battle of providing and protecting critical information on the battlefield. Edwin provided vital linguistic and cryptologic-related support to coalition troops in the region. Sometimes he was a translator; on other occasions he helped those in harm's way to better discern the threats against them. But in whatever capacity he served, Edwin's work was indispensable in securing victory and saving lives. The motto of the Special Forces is *De Oppresso Liber* - to liberate the oppressed. During his time in our nation's military—whether he was in Bosnia, Iraq or Afghanistan—SSG Edwin H. DazaChacon more than lived up to this inspiring mantra.

On his last day on this earth, Edwin and three other servicemen were called upon to rescue a group of soldiers whose vehicle had overturned during a river crossing. On their way to the area, their Humvee hit a land mine and came under heavy enemy fire. All would perish in the ensuing firefight. For his bravery and courage that day, Edwin would posthumously be awarded the Bronze Star for Valor, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.

Edwin's service and sacrifice for his nation, both on that day and throughout his life, would show that in his heart he understood the true meaning of what it means to be an American soldier. President Kennedy once said, "In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility—I welcome it."

Like President Kennedy, SSG Edwin H. DazaChacon never shrank from that responsibility. The energy, faith, and devotion that he brought to his endeavors will continue to inspire our country and all who serve it for generations to come.



SSG Edwin H. DazaChacon

United States Army

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Photos courtesy of the DazaChacon Family
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