

Tribute to Staff Sergeant Matthew Morgan

A Memorial was held June 28, 2023, for Staff Sergeant Matthew Morgan, USA, who lost his life during a dive on the USS Emmons February 2, 2020:

The sky was a hazy grey as we made our way out of port. The smell of salt hung in the air and the sea breeze roughly caressed our somber faces. It has been three years, four months and 26 days since Matt last took this trip out to the Emmons: since he died. It is odd being back in Okinawa without him, but comforting in the sense that this is where his soul resides.

To say Matt was an avid diver would be a disservice. That man had a passion for diving that was unmatched. He was constantly challenging himself to advance his skills and cultivate a community of divers that shared his ambition. When we moved to Okinawa in 2014 Matt was an Open Water PADI Diver. He traversed through the ranks and switched into technical diving, ultimately sharing his passion for the underwater world as a Technical Dive Instructor with SSI. It is poetically painful that he died doing what he loved.

Myself, Matt's Mom, Sister, Step-Dad, Brother-In-Law and two close local friends make our way to the Emmons site at 0800 and float above his plaque on the seafloor. As we ebb and flow with the rhythm of the waves, the sun comes out; as if the universe, and perhaps Matt himself, knew we were there. We toast to Matt with Oreos (his vice of choice) and share memories about him; tears streaming down all our faces. We each toss a single red rose onto the surface of the water and cry harder as they sink out of sight, drawing comparison to what happened here three years, four months and 26 days ago.

As we circle around the wreck and say our final goodbyes, the clouds come back and the sun hides. The trip back to port was silent, all of us collectively feeling grief in our own ways. As we reached land about an hour after we embarked, the idea that those who perished on the Emmons all those years ago had someone new to talk to brought smiles to our faces. Matt loved Okinawa, diving and specifically exploring the Emmons wreck; it is comforting to think that he is not alone.

A special thank you to the Emmons Association for their condolences, as well as, to Chuck DeCesari for safely taking us to and from the site. Being able to be there has been something I have felt I've needed since he died, and I am grateful for those who helped make this trip happen.

Written by:
Amanda Morgan (Matt's wife)
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