

January 24, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter of testimony as a means to express my support for Bill SB5, which is a bill to establish a portion of Highway 69 in Overland Park, KS to be named the 2LT Justin Lee Sisson Memorial Highway. But more importantly, I am writing this letter to tell you how 2LT Justin Lee Sisson and his family have changed my life.

I didn't know Justin. I never heard him speak or laugh. I never saw him play baseball or commission as a Second Lieutenant or graduate Ranger School. But on June 3, 2013, as an Army nurse stationed at Forward Operating Base Salerno in Khost Province, Afghanistan, I had the distinct honor of watching one of America's finest soldiers take his last breaths. That soldier was 2LT Justin Sisson. I call it an honor because that one moment has forever changed my life, and I am thankful to have been one of the 20 medical providers taking care of Justin and the 8 soldiers and 1 interpreter that needed medical care that day.

In the months following Justin's death, I had many emotions. I could not fathom how someone whom I had never met could change my life. I wanted to know more about him, and wanted to know how someone's last moments could change thousands of moments for me. Through God's grace and an angel looking out for me, I was able to contact Justin's parents, Kevin and Phyllis. That one opportunity has helped me heal in more ways than I can ever describe. It has almost been like putting a puzzle together. I was able to share my vivid memories of Justin's last moments, and his parents have been able to fill in the blanks of his amazing 23 years of life.

I have learned 3 very valuable and distinct lessons in the almost 20 months since Justin has been gone. The first is to be courageous. Justin died while serving his country, a cause that he truly believed in. He died protecting his soldiers and exemplified the highest level of courage when he laid down his life for a cause bigger than himself. The second lesson is to never let fear dictate your actions. I have no doubt on the day of his death Justin felt some sense of fear or anxiety. I truly believe that he knew the individual responsible for his death was going to attack, but that did not change his actions. He became one of my hero's that day because he chose to do the right thing, despite the fear I'm sure he felt. The third, and most important lesson, is to live life to the fullest. Justin's 23 years were filled with more life lived than most people could accomplish in 60 years. He never let anything stand in his way, and always went after what he wanted. He accomplished so much and simply enjoyed life. I knew that fact about him on June 3, 2013, when I looked in his eyes as he was passing away and saw a sense of peace that I can only hope and pray I have one day. It was as if he knew it was his last day, and he was at peace with his death and the way he had lived his life.

Justin's life has changed many lives. I know that for a fact, because if it can change the life of someone who never met him, it certainly changed the lives of everyone who knew him. There is rarely a day that goes by that I don't think of Justin. I look down at my right wrist, which holds the Killed in Action bracelet for Justin. When I look at the bracelet, I think about all of the men and women we have lost, but some days I just remember

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Justin. Some days are meant just for him, to remember the life he gave and the “what if’s.” But everyday he holds a special place in my heart.

This highway isn’t just about Justin. It’s about those of us who are left behind. It’s about his family, his friends, and all the men and women who have served and are still serving our country. It’s a memorial for everything that we lost on June 3, 2013, and everything that we hope to find in Justin’s absence. It has been an honor to serve my country and to know men and women like Justin. Please honor Justin with this memorial on Hwy 69. By doing so, you would also honor his family and those that have served, are serving, and their families.

Sincerely,

Brienna Zeiger
Captain, U.S. Army
Proud Army Nurse