

We, Paul and Teresa Reddick of 8008 W. 145th Street, Overland Park, Kansas, urge the Kansas State Legislature to approve the dedication of Kansas Highway 69, between 135th and 167th Streets, to honor 2LT Justin Lee Sisson, the man and his service.

Seeing “American Sniper” last weekend, we are reminded that right here in Overland Park, Kansas, we have our own Chris Kyle in Second Lieutenant Justin Lee Sisson. Justin served as a true warrior for our country – with selflessness, honor, a sense of purpose, and a steadiness that cannot be completely captured in a movie.

It is so easy to imagine that part of the highway, in particular, being named after Justin. It is a peaceful stretch, with the calmness of Kingston Lake on the west side. So many times we would experience that calmness as we would drive our kids on treks to Blue Valley West High School their freshman and sophomore years, those last few years before they could drive themselves. Our son, Thomas, was going to school with Justin during that time. They grew to be dear friends. That was an era when they were still getting to be boys, earning their Eagle Scout Awards, navigating high school, and sorting what’s next. It would be incredibly meaningful to us, personally - let alone his family and this entire community - to know that not only is this stretch of Highway 69 named after the boy we all grew to love, but the man we all knew he would become.

Justin would revisit this highway in between tours. He would come back to the area to see his grandmother, catch up with friends, and sometimes stay at our house, a stones throw from the highway. It seemed he had learned to even more deeply appreciate things many of us take for granted in this free and well protected country – a warm bed in a spare room, a hot shower, longer and deeper chats with people he loved, and even day old egg casserole and blueberry French toast. We say he seemed to have become “more deeply appreciative”, because there was always a sense he was born and grew up appreciating the privileges we have.

On one of these trips, in the steady demeanor that was Justin, he shared he was going on a high-risk tour and had not told his mom yet, but soon would. You could see the concern in his eyes. Teresa told him that, as a mother, this made her nervous. He said he took these tours because he wanted us, and others, to sleep soundly at night and enjoy the freedoms of this great nation. He also said that he wanted to honor the legacy of past heroes. You could feel his passion and his unwavering sense of purpose and duty. At the time, Phyllis and Kevin were living in Arizona – and Teresa tried, in her own way, to give him moral and maternal support. He would sometimes call her his “second” mom. The day he left, he left a note on the floor. He addressed it to “Mom”, saying how much he appreciated the hospitality. For whatever reason Teresa decided to save that note. She treasures it and still has it to this day. It was not that Justin didn’t have an incredible mother. In fact it was because he had such an incredible mother, that he carried this deep sense of gratitude. He was simply communicating that he knew we were all one big community helping each other.

So in our little community along this highway in the great state of Kansas, we always knew that Justin was destined for greatness. In fact, we might have expected that he would one day hold office and be in a position to help lead this state and country. We could imagine him voting to name buildings, parks, and highways to commemorate the great works of others; because we all know he wasn't one to promote himself. What we did not expect was that he would sacrifice so much so soon. Nor did we expect that it would be us, that are now be asking you, to commemorate him, to show him the gratitude, and to show him how deeply we sense we are one big community helping each other. But we are. Please do.

Most sincerely,

Paul and Teresa Reddick