

Testimonials in Honor of 2LT Justin Lee Sisson

January 25, 2015

Dear members of the Transportation Committee of the Kansas State Legislature,

This letter is written in support of SB 5: designating a portion of U.S. Highway 69 in Overland Park, Kansas, as "The 2LT Justin Lee Sisson Memorial Highway." 2LT Justin Sisson is a local hero to Overland Park, KS. His leadership ability was evident early in life. Before he graduated from Blue Valley West High School, he earned the honor of Eagle Scout. He was also the captain of his high school wrestling team.

This humble hero then put college on hold after his freshman year at Florida State University, and deployed to Iraq with the Army National Guard, in which he earned a Bronze Star Medal. Once back at FSU, Justin became the Cadet Battalion Commander of FSU's Army ROTC. 2LT Sisson's accomplishments include receiving the George C Marshall Award, as well as being a distinguished honor grad from IBOLC, Sapper School, and FSU's Army ROTC. He graduated from FSU and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in May 2012. 2LT Sisson also graduated from Air Assault, Airborne, and Ranger School. He was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) 4th BCT, 1-506th IN, Ft. Campbell, KY, in January 2013. In April 2013, he deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

2LT Sisson's awards include two Bronze Star Medals, Purple Heart, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with Device, NATO Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, the Sapper Tab, and Ranger Tab.

2LT Justin Sisson was killed in action in Tsamkani, Afghanistan on June 3, 2013, by a suicide bomber. His compassion impacted many lives, and the following are just a few testimonials from some of those who had the honor of knowing him.

"I had the privilege of having Justin as a student for two years and as my Ranger Challenge Team Captain. I could tell Justin was destined for great achievements, from the time I first met him. He had a positive effect on everyone he encountered by his character, his attitude about life and his free spirit personality. Every soldier would have loved to have a leader such as Justin, and every leader, a follower like him. Defeat and failure were two words Justin would never accept. His outstanding physical fitness level was unparalleled or matched by other team members," says Master Sergeant Michael E. Jackson, an ROTC instructor and Ranger Challenge Coach at FSU.

CPT Katie Durham was in FSU's Army ROTC and Pershing Rifles with Justin. She says, "He was a true gentleman. He could out PT you any day, but would then stand by your side until you finished, too. He was mature beyond his years but still loved to be with all his friends, having a good time and laughing."

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HM3(FMF) Karle Hamer has been friends with Justin since high school. "Justin's legacy isn't something that you adequately can put into words, or at least I can't," explains Hamer. "It's something I feel, something that each person feels differently. To some, it may be the legacy of a mentor, a teacher, a caring son, or a role model they want to emulate. For me, the legacy of my best friend is one of compassion, confidence, respect, insight, persistence, knowledge, and so many other things that I cannot describe."

LT William Haig became friends with Justin in IBOLC and Ranger School. "I was lucky enough to get to know Justin through the Army and I can honestly say he was one of the best soldiers, leaders, and persons, I have ever met," says Haig. Haig tells how Justin graduated number one in his class from some of the most prestigious schools the Army has to offer, while surrounded by some of the most elite, "type A" men in the Army. "Justin not only gained the respect of these men, but he became a leadership figure we all wanted to emulate. He was the best; he was literally good at everything, yet extremely humble. He never forgot about the team around him, and was always willing to help anyone out. It is unique to find someone with these characteristics. Justin was only 23 years old when he died, but in that short amount of time he left more of a legacy than most people who live a full lifetime. He was just as much of a teacher as he was a student, dedicating his life to a cause much bigger than himself...a life of selfless service and sacrifice. He fought in two wars by an age where most people are just graduating college. Justin is the true definition of a hero," says Haig.

I became friends with Justin at FSU, through Students for America's Military, Inc. What is so unique about Justin, is that even though he was the epitome of success, he was incredibly humble about his achievements. You never heard about Justin's accomplishments from Justin, only through others. That was Justin's character. He was the most humble person I've ever met, and the legacy he has left behind is a true testament to the life he lived. While organizing and directing the First Annual 2LT Justin Sisson 5K, I had the privilege of hearing countless stories of this honorable hero. The testimonies shared within this letter are just a few of the many lives 2LT Sisson has impacted. Naming a portion of U.S. HWY 69 "The 2LT Justin Lee Sisson Memorial Highway" would continue to share his legacy with others, ensuring his character, accomplishments, life, and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Thank you for your consideration,

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