

“All gave some; some gave all.”

SSG Christopher James Birdwell (1987-2012) made the ultimate sacrifice in service to his country on August 27, 2012, in Kalagush, Afghanistan. He was killed in action by injuries suffered from enemy small-arms fire. Christopher was assigned to 4STB, 4BCT, 4ID, Fort Carson, Colorado.

Honor

Respected in life and honored in death, Christopher will be awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart for his sacrifice. Well suited for his post, he completed Airborne training in 2007, executing over 100 jumps, along with Sniper and Sapper training in 2011. Christopher thrived on his responsibility to protect his country and earned other distinctions, such as Squad Leader and Armorer, during his enlistment. His heroism and leadership were an inspiration to those who served with him.

Valor

Born June 2nd, 1987, Christopher is lovingly remembered and survived in death by his parents, Jim and Pam Birdwell, his brother, Dustin Birdwell, and his sisters, Maley and Maegan Birdwell. His memory will live on in the hearts of many family members including his grandmother, Doris Birdwell, and his grandfather, Richard Oliver; Jeff and Julie Riley and their children, Katie and Ian Stewart and Joey Riley; Roger and Deidre Birdwell and their children, John Birdwell and Jennifer Birdwell; Scott and Rose Oliver and their children, Drew, Sharlene and Josh Oliver; Rick and Deb Shively and their children, Sgt. Erick Shively and Jenna Shively; Chris and Vicky Henderson and their children, Sereana Little, Katheryn, Aimy, and Larah Henderson. He was preceded in death by his grandfather, James Birdwell, his grandmother, Patricia Smith, and his cousin, Patricia Oliver.

Bravery

Behind the uniform, Chris was a man whose infectious laugh could make anyone smile; he was a generous friend and servant of many. His vivacity for life was evident in his fondness for speed. Chris enjoyed everything from fast cars, motorcycles, and ATVs, to skydiving and shooting sports. Ever a thrill seeker, he loved snow and cold weather and enjoyed snowboarding, snowmobiling, and other outdoor activities. His talent for enjoying life touched everyone who knew him. Christopher graduated from Windsor High School in Windsor, Colorado in 2005 before enlisting in 2006.

Faith

Raised in a home of faith and conviction, Chris was baptized into Christ on April 25, 2004, solidifying his hope of heaven through faith. He was a member of the Windsor Church of Christ, where he built friendships to last for eternity. With a firm belief in his purpose and convictions supported by his faith, Chris's sacrifice reflects that of his Lord and Savior, the Giver of eternal life. His legacy will survive in the hearts of his family and friends until they are reunited in heaven.

Heroism

SSG Christopher J. Birdwell's heroic sacrifice for his country will be remembered by the nation who stood behind him. Chris will be remembered more fondly and missed deeply by

the many family and friends who loved him best, including his girlfriend, Vanessa Mitchell, and her daughter, Baylie. His joyful spirit, generous heart, fun-loving nature, bravery, and sacrifice are still alive in all who knew him. He was one of America's best. Until we meet again.

Christopher Birdwell will be memorialized at Fort Carson and laid to rest at Fort Logan National Cemetery.

Biography - Highlights

Chris was born June 2nd, 1987 in Englewood, Colorado at Swedish Hospital. (He was the first of four children in the Birdwell family. Siblings are Dustin, Maley & Maegan.) We were living in Englewood at the time, off Elati Street & Bellevue. Chris' favorite playmate was the girl next door, Krissy. She was a few years older than him, but neither minded and she was a wonderful friend. Chris was just a few years old when he picked up an interest in video games, particularly Duck Hunt. He had other interests such as superheroes, Batman & Ninja Turtles, his big wheel, and camouflage Jeep.

We moved to Highlands Ranch in November 1991, where Chris completed his elementary & middle school days. He played baseball, mastered the trampoline, rollerbladed, loved paintball, basketball, and bicycling, and made lifelong friends with Sean Donlon. During Chris' 9th grade year (2001), shortly after 911, we moved to Grand Lake for 8 months. Chris loved the mountains, cold weather and the sports that come along with it. He started skiing early on but switched to snowboarding after breaking his leg skiing in 4th grade. Chris loved snowmobile and shooting sports. Always an adventurer and loved the adrenalin rush.

We moved to Windsor, Colorado, in 2002, where Chris graduated from high school in 2005. Chris & a buddy wanted to join the Marines that summer after graduating high school, but his buddy could not pass the medical tests. Recruiters encouraged Chris to take a few courses at FRCC so he would go into the military at a higher rank. Chris took one semester and started speaking with the army in December. He enlisted in January 2006 and left the MEPS Denver Facility on March 13, 2006, to attend basic and Advanced Training in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri as a 12B, Combat Engineer. (Chris' first letter home made us laugh as he told us the army had the strictest rules - which was one of the reasons for leaving home - to get away from our rules!) He was paired up with a soldier/bunk buddy who had no rhythm, could not make his bed, and needed help passing his physical fitness tests. Rhythm was important when it came to marching, running, staying in formation & keeping in sync. This soldier recycled, and Chris graduated and was assigned to the 27th Engineer Battalion (Airborne), Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Chris' first deployment came on the heels of his basic training in August 2006 to Afghanistan until March 2007.

Chris attended Airborne training in the summer of 2007 in Fort Benning, Georgia. (We attended Chris' graduation in September 2007 and his dad, Jim, had the privilege of pinning on his wings.)

While Chris was stationed in North Carolina, he took advantage of visiting beaches, loved water sports (including boogie boards), and bought his favorite car, a 2006 GTO. He learned to drift and loved the speed.

During the spring and summer of 2008, Chris turned 21 and had been thinking of getting out of the army in May 2009. It was his window of being recruited to re-enlist and in August of 2008, Chris re-enlisted & changed his duty station to Fort Carson, Colorado. He left North Carolina in November 2008 and PCS'd (permanent change of station) to the 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division., Fort Carson, Colorado. (We loved having him so much closer, and he loved coming home on weekends to hang out with his friends in Northern Colorado – Krystal & Mallorie Lieker were among his favorites. He loved going out with friends, dancing, playing beer pong & cooking.)

He was promoted to the rank of Sergeant (SGT) in January 2009 and posthumously promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant (SSG) on August 28, 2012. Chris was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company as a command group driver and deployed a second time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) from June 2009 to April 2010 while serving as a member of the Command Sergeant Major's Physical Security Detachment.

Chris completed Sniper training in September 2011 – this was a school he had been waiting for quite some time to attend. Chris spent hours upon hours making his Gilley suit and proudly showing it to us while on a visit to Colorado Springs.

Following his second deployment, Chris was reassigned to Alpha Company, 4 Brigade Special Troops Battalion as a Combat Engineer Team Leader serving on his third deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom XIII. This deployment was different than the first two. The Afghans were leading this time. He left March 4th, where we wished him Godspeed. In April of this year, the spring attacks by insurgents began on Kabul and three Eastern provinces. Chris was out on a mission where they had two IEDs explode within a few hours of each other. The second explosion damaged the vehicle to where it could not be driven and caused injuries to the soldiers inside. They were medevaced by helicopter back to base only to find their base/b-hut had burned to the ground by a suicide bomber. All they had shipped over was gone and only what was in their packs while on mission was what they had. We were just glad everyone was ok. Chris continued on and made the best of what he had. He took the opportunity to complete some online courses as he was in a promotable status.

On August 27th, on their mission back to their base, one of the vehicles in their convoy was damaged by an IED explosion. Chris and a few others dismounted to sweep & secure the area. While securing soldiers who were helping to tow the damaged vehicle, Chris and SPC Mabry Anders were gunned down by an Afghan Army soldier who turned on them, another Green-on-Blue incident. They were the 42nd & 43rd of its kind this year. This ANA soldier had just come off the Ramadan holiday the day prior, given a weapon, and allowed to roll their convoy within 5M of our son. By the time anyone could get to them, they were gone. They gave the ultimate sacrifice and are our heroes.

His military education includes Warrior Leaders Course, Unit Armorer Course, Airborne School, Unit Prevention Leader (UPL) Course, Mine Resistant Ambush Protect (MRAP) Vehicles Course, Sniper School, Route Reconnaissance Clearance Course, Sapper School and Combat Life Saver Course.

His awards and decorations included the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal (1 OLC), Army Achievement Medal, the Good Conduct Medal (2 OLC), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism, Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Combat Action Badge, Parachute Badge and Meritorious Unit Commendation (2 OLC).

While at Dover Air Force Base, we met SPC Mabry Anders' mother, Gen, and stepfather, Troy. We spent some time with them and through conversations about our boys, learned they had striking similarities. They both loved shooting sports and fast bikes, but more importantly, had the uncanny ability to make people laugh.