

PETERSON DEDICATES MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT WITH PLAQUE by Staff Sgt. Alexandra Longfellow - 21st Space Wing Public Affairs

MAY 20, 2019 - PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, COLORADO SPRINGS, CO - Members of the Peterson Air Force Base community witnessed the Medal of Honor dedication ceremony for Master Sgt. John A. Chapman, U.S. Air Force combat controller, on Monday, May 20, 2019.



Terry Chapman, mother of Master Sgt. John Chapman, and family members look at his name etched upon the Medal of Honor memorial May 20, 2019 at the Peterson Air and Space Museum. Sergeant Chapman's name is memorialized along with 62 of his fellow heroic Airmen, for all who live, work or visit Peterson AFB to see. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alexandra M. Longfellow)

Chapman was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross for his actions in the Battle of Takur Ghar during Operation Enduring Freedom in the war in Afghanistan. He was the first Air Force combat controller to earn the Air Force Cross in any war in history.

Chapman's Air Force Cross was upgraded to the Medal of Honor on August 22, 2018 from his actions during Operation Anaconda on March 4, 2002. Chapman was the first Airman to receive the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War.

"Master Sgt. Chapman answered his nation's call in 1985, 16 full years before the attack on our country in 2001," said Col. Todd Moore, 21st Space Wing commander. "His final assignment was with the 24th Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina.

Chapman, along with members of the U.S. Navy SEALs, took part in the operation. Their helicopter came under enemy fire, causing a team member to fall out during an insertion. Chapman provided directions to another helicopter to pick them up.

After being rescued, Chapman and his team volunteered to go back and rescue their team member from the enemy stronghold. Chapman killed two enemy soldiers, exchanged fire from minimum personal cover and succumbed to multiple wounds.

He is credited with saving the lives of the entire rescue team.



Terry Chapman (left), mother of Master Sgt. John Chapman, and Col. Todd Moore (right), 21st Space Wing commander, stand next to the Medal of Honor recipient plaque at the Peterson Air and Space Museum on May 20, 2019. The ceremony was held to commemorate the valor and service of Sergeant Chapman, the U.S. Air Force's newest Medal of Honor recipient. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Alexandra M. Longfellow)

The Medal of Honor plaque was unveiled acknowledging his honor and has been placed at the Peterson Air and Space Museum Memorial.

“Today, with this small gesture, placing this small plaque on our memorial, we will not fail to honor our Airman,” said Moore. “We will not leave his memory behind.”

Chapman is survived by his mother, Terry Chapman; his widow, Valerie Nessel; and two daughters, Brianna and Madison Chapman.

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT JOHN CHAPMAN MEMORIALIZED AT POPE ARMY AIRFIELD by Danielle Knight

MAY 30, 2019 - SPECIAL WARFARE TRAINING WING - POPE ARMY AIRFIELD, NC - Master Sgt. John Chapman was commemorated during a Medal of Honor dedication at Pope Army Airfield on May 30.

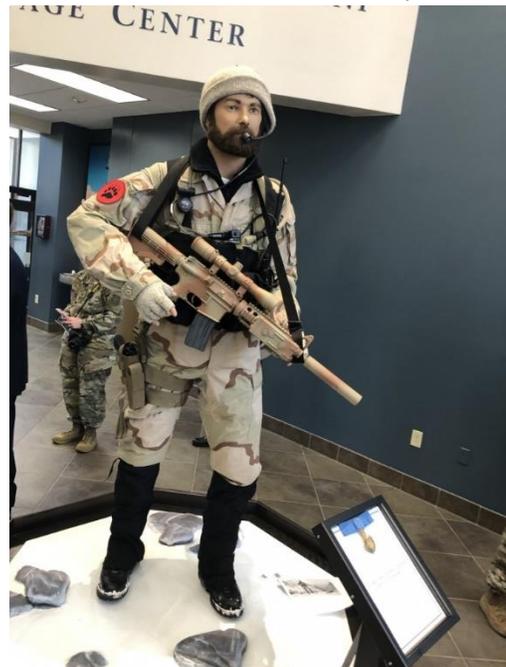


Maj. Michael Bain, commander of the 352nd Special Warfare Training Squadron, briefs Valerie Nessel, John Chapman's widow during statue viewing. Sgt John Chapman was commemorated during a Medal of Honor dedication at Pope Army Air Field (Photo By Alexander Goad)

A life-size figure of Chapman, a hand-drawn portrait and a replica of his Medal of Honor were unveiled and placed on permanent display at the Benini Heritage Center, a nationally recognized museum that is part of the 352nd Special Warfare Training Squadron, home of the Combat Control apprentice course. An outdoor memorial ceremony hosted by Col. James Hughes followed the reveal, with Ms. Valerie Nessel, the spouse of Chapman, and other Gold Star spouses: Melanie Sather and Tabitha Brown. Gen. Stephen W. Wilson, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, was keynote speaker at the memorial.

The figure of Chapman and the replica of his Medal of Honor are placed at the entrance to the schoolhouse as a centerpiece for the museum, to both inspire and remind students of the sacrifices of the fallen. (Photo by Master Sgt. Katherine Novales - 43rd Air Mobility Operations Group Public Affairs)

Hughes extended his thanks to the Gold Star families that came out to the event, stating that their presence means more to the Special Warfare community than they realized. His sentiment was met with a standing ovation in thanks of their enduring support. "Pope Air Force Base, now Pope Army Airfield, is a special place in the history of Air Force combat control and special tactics over the past four decades. It is a special place for John Chapman, where you



have the combat control schoolhouse he went through,” said Hughes. “Memorializing him here, where we forge the next generation of Special Tactics warriors is particularly fitting.”

Combat Control is the most highly decorated career field in the Air Force for acts of valor since the Vietnam War. The museum was put into place upon the building of the schoolhouse in order to inspire the students and instructors on a daily basis. The figure of Chapman and the replica of his Medal of Honor are placed at the entrance to the schoolhouse as a centerpiece for the museum, to both inspire and remind students of the sacrifices of the fallen.

“This is truly the intersection of heritage and heroes,” said Wilson. “Every Airman here has measured themselves or has been inspired in past centuries by heroes like Levitow, Pitsenbarger, Sijan. They will do the same for John Chapman and they will do it for years to come.”



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Prior to the event, Nessel had the opportunity to address the upcoming graduating class of combat controllers.

“It is particularly impactful that John’s legacy is standing guard over the future of our combat control community; a community I consider to be family.” said Nessel. “I hope John’s dedication and sacrifice continue to inspire the next generation of heroes who are answering the call to serve and protect our nation. And that they always remember the stories of those who have gone before them, so their names are never forgotten.

Maj. Michael Bain, commander of the 352nd Special Warfare Training Squadron, was a close friend and teammate of

Chapman's. He and others made it possible to have the likeness and Medal of Honor replica housed in the Heritage Center.

"[Chapman] understood the capabilities that combat controllers bring to the fight, and it was a badge of honor to know that he was on my team," said Bain. "He was the first friend I lost, and sometimes I don't feel like we talk enough about him. Having him memorialized at the schoolhouse feels like a way of bringing him home."

For more information on MSgt. John Chapman and his heroism, visit: <https://static.dma.mil/usaf/medalofhonor-chapman/>

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