

# VETERANS LEGACY PROGRAM TRIBUTE

Sergeant Christian B. Williams  
United States Marine Corps

**VA**



**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

National Cemetery  
Administration



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Department  
of History**



SERGEANT CHRISTIAN B. WILLIAMS

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

NOV 30TH, 1978 – JULY 29TH, 2006



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The University of Central Florida Veterans Legacy Program would like to thank Christian's parents, Lisa and Jack Williams, and his sister, Neliza Patterson, for their unwavering dedication and belief in this project. They made this tribute possible through their heartfelt and detailed reflections on Christin's life of service.

UCF VLP would also like to thank Christian's Marine brothers for offering their detailed thoughts and memories. Thank you to Christopher Retif, Derick Letteau, Ethan Arguello, and Rueben Rivera.

# AGENDA

Early Life

Military Service

Attack on July 29, 2006

Post-Attack

Legacy

References



Christian ca. 2005

## EARLY LIFE

- Oldest son of Jack and Lisa Williams
  - Neliza Patterson (sister)
  - Jonahlyn Greathouse (sister)
  - Vincent Williams (brother)
- Christian and his sisters were born in the Philippines, Vincent was born in Japan
- Jack Served 22 years in the US Navy
  - E-7 Chief Machinist's Mate



The Williams Family, ca 1991

# EARLY LIFE

- Jack retired from the Navy in 1994
  - Worked for the Merchant Marines
  - Moved his family to Winter Haven, FL
- Christian grew up with desire to serve in the military
  - Winter Haven High School
    - Joined the Army JROTC
      - Drill Team
      - Summer Camp at Camp Blanding, FL
  - Met best friend Derrick Letteau

## EARLY LIFE

- Christian and Derrick moved to Lake Region High School when it opened in 1995
  - Both joined Marine Corps JROTC
    - Rifle Team
    - Drill Team
    - PT Team
  - Record setting high school weightlifter
    - Accepted to National Junior Championship
      - Turned down to focus on JROTC
- Joined the Delayed Entry Program with the Marine Corps and graduated in 1997
  - Allowing him to enlist at 17 with parental permission



Derrick & Christian,  
MCJROTC Ball,  
1996/97

# MILITARY SERVICE

- Christian began Marine Corps Recruit Training in the summer of 1997
  - Plt 2104, G Co, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, MCRD Parris Island, SC
- Attended the School of Infantry at Camp Lejeune, NC
  - Trained as an Infantry Rifleman
- Christian left active duty in late 1999
  - Returned home
  - Enrolled in Polk County Community College
- He still had the desire to be a Marine



Christian with his father and younger siblings, ca. 2000



# MILITARY SERVICE

- Christian returned to the Marine Corps in 2000 as a TOW Gunner
- Stationed for a one-year tour on Okinawa through 2001
  - Trained *balikatan*, shoulder-to-shoulder, with Filipino Marines
- Returned to Camp Lejeune and joined Weapons Co, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Rgt, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division
  - Went on leave shortly after 9/11/2001 to help at Ground Zero in NYC

# MILITARY SERVICE

- While with Weapons Co, 2/6, Christian deployed with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit from February to August 2002
  - Stopped in:
    - Greece,
    - Turkey
    - Djibouti
    - Bahrain
    - Spain
  - Christian also participated in a detachment to Afghanistan
- Christian deployed to Iraq for the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003

# MILITARY SERVICE

- Christian departed the Corps a second time in 2005
  - Returned home and worked at Hughes Electric with Derrick
  - He did not feel at home in civilian life
  - Wanted to be back with his Marines
- Enlisted a third time in early 2006
  - Moved to Light Armored Reconnaissance
  - Joined 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, D Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in Twentynine Palms, CA

# MILITARY SERVICE – Light Armored Reconnaissance

- 3<sup>rd</sup> LAR operated the Light Armored Vehicle – 25 (LAV-25)
- The LAV-25
  - All terrain & all weather
  - Speed, maneuverability, and firepower
  - Multifunctional role
    - Security, command & control, recon, and assault
  - Operates on land and in water
  - Carry communications equipment
  - Weapons platform
  - Night capabilities

# MILITARY SERVICE

- 3<sup>rd</sup> LAR's nickname is The Wolfpack
  - "The strength of the pack is the wolf; the strength of the wolf is the pack"
- Pre-deployment preparations before going to Iraq in spring 2006
  - Christian was a sergeant by this time
    - Though new to the unit, he gained a quick reputation as a strong and level-headed leader
  - Christian took pre-deployment leave
    - He visited his family across multiple states

# MILITARY SERVICE

- Deployed to Al Anbar Province, Iraq in April 2006
  - Operated all over Western Iraq
    - Karmah
    - Trebil
    - Al Taqaddum
    - Anah
    - Habbaniyah
    - Haditha
    - Rawah
  - Supported various units across services
    - Cordon and search
    - Nighttime operations



Christian and Marines from 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon in Iraq

# ATTACK ON JULY 29, 2006

- Christian's platoon was near Rawah
  - Early afternoon with bad weather developing
  - LCpl Tony Butterfield and Cpl Phillip Baucus were on post
  - Christian and his Marines were inside a makeshift compound
- A vehicle approached their checkpoint
  - LCpl Butterfield and Cpl Baucus ordered the driver to stop, he did not, so they opened fire to stop vehicle
  - They killed the driver and stopped the vehicle outside the compound
  - Despite their efforts, the driver detonated the IED onboard his vehicle

# ATTACK ON JULY 29, 2006

- The explosion took the lives of LCpl Butterfield and Cpl Baucus
- The walls and roof of the compound collapsed on
  - Sgt Christian B. Williams
  - Cpl Adam A. Galvez
  - LCpl Jason Hanson
  - LCpl Joseph T. Hand
- The rest of 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon responded
- A firefight ensued as they provided medical attention



# ATTACK ON JULY 29, 2006

- All four Marines within the compound were buried by the rubble and injured
  - Once freed, despite a broken ankle, Cpl Galvez helped to uncover his comrades from the destruction
- When Sgt Williams, Lcpl Hanson, and LCpl Hand were free, they and Cpl Galvez were medically evacuated
- Tragically, Sgt Christian B. Williams and LCpl Jason Hanson succumbed to their wounds

# POST-ATTACK

- 3<sup>rd</sup> LAR stood down for two days to mourn and memorialize the fallen
- On August 20, 3<sup>rd</sup> LAR suffered three more losses with the deaths of
  - Cpl Adam A. Galvez
  - LCpl Randy L. Newman
  - HN Chadwick T. Kenyon
- 3<sup>rd</sup> LAR returned home September 2006



Memorial Photos of Fallen 3<sup>rd</sup>  
LAR Marines from the 2006  
Deployment

# LEGACY

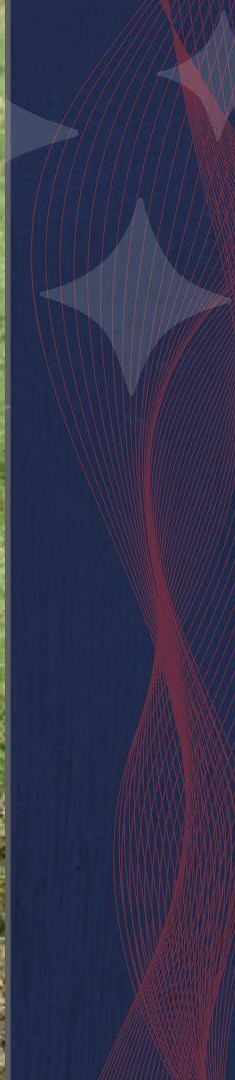
- Christian's family was notified of his death and his remains began the journey home
  - His remains arrived in Tampa days later
- His funeral Mass was held at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Winter Haven
  - Standing room only



Christian's sister and nephew visit his headstone

# LEGACY

- Interred at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell
  - Over 300 Patriot Guard Rider escorts
- Christian rests with his fellow Veterans in Section 402, Site 53



# LEGACY

- Christian's death and funeral widely reported by local news
- Family and friends held memorials at local VFW
- Posted online memorials
- Lake Alfred Veterans Memorial Park in Polk County dedicated to Christian and his fallen comrades on June 22, 2014
- Derrick Letteau walks from his Arkansas home to local Veterans park every Memorial Day
  - 10 Mile walk with Marine Corps flag signed by 3rd LAR Marines
  - Local News coverage
  - Raised money to clean up the park

# LEGACY

- In May of 2023, the Williams family suffered the loss of their youngest son Vincent
- Vincent idolized his older brother, Christian
  - Though he did not join the military, he followed his brother in service
  - Fed, clothed, and housed the poor
  - Donated much of his income to help the less fortunate
  - Local community and beyond
- Vincent suffered for years with seizures due to a traumatic brain injury
  - A blood clot claimed Vincent's life on May 4, 2023



Vincent Williams

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All photographs curtesy of the Williams family.