

# UCF's Veterans Legacy Program



**VA**



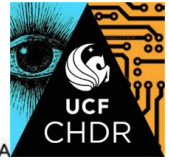
**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**  
National Cemetery  
Administration



**UCF**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Department  
of History**



Justin Dean Coleman

1987 – 2009

Specialist: US Army

Afghanistan

\*Please note that news articles published online often exist behind paywalls and require a subscription to access digitally. We have provided links, but have not reproduced them here. Similarly, many families have created remembrance pages. Again, we have provided links, but have not reproduced any images without express written permission from the family.

“Hernando County Marriage Applications,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 10, 2007 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/330952196/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

A brief note in the *Tampa Bay Times* announcing the marriage of Justin Dean Coleman and Nicole Lynn Jenkins.

Steve Ruark, “Florida Soldier Stationed at Fort Drum Killed in Afghanistan,” *Post-Standard* (Syracuse, NY), July 27, 2009 (accessed July 25, 2023).

[https://www.syracuse.com/news/2009/07/fla\\_soldier\\_from\\_fort\\_drum\\_kil.html](https://www.syracuse.com/news/2009/07/fla_soldier_from_fort_drum_kil.html)

An article published three days after Coleman’s death in Afghanistan, which provides information on his family and a brief history of his training and service in the US Army. It also lists the awards that Coleman earned, and a selection of images depicting Coleman in his military uniform and his casket returning to the US.

“Toll of War Touches Close to Home,” *Tampa Bay Times*, July 28, 2009, 21 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331374515/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

This article includes a photograph of an Army team transporting the remains of Justin Dean Coleman off of an airplane at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware several days after his death. It also includes a photograph of Coleman and a short excerpt detailing the circumstances of his death and that he initially joined the Army when he graduated high school in order to earn money for college. This article mentions that Coleman was killed while on a mission to search for prisoner of war Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl.

John Frank, “One of the Best Guys We Had,” *Tampa Bay Times*, July 28, 2009, 3 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331373513/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

An account of the mission that Coleman died on, during which he and his team were searching for captured US Army soldier Bowe R. Bergdahl. This article also includes the text from one of the last messages Coleman sent his father.

---, "Gone, but Not Forgotten," *Tampa Bay Times*, July 30, 2009, 14 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331381098/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

An article that includes quotations from Coleman's family, in which people like his father share some of the memories he has of his son. The article mentions that in one of Coleman's last posts on his online blog, he expressed his worry that he would be forgotten. Also included are photographs of Coleman's father and widow.

Ron Thompson, "Fallen Soldier is Home," *Tampa Bay Times*, July 31, 2009, 15 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331381639/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

A brief article about Coleman's funeral and military service. It mentions that at the time of his death, Coleman was the fourth serviceman from Hernando County, FL to die in Afghanistan. This piece also includes a photograph of Coleman's casket in front of his grieving family members.

"Obituaries: Coleman, Justin Dean, 1987-2009," *Tampa Bay Times*, August 1, 2009, 9 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331364633/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

The above link navigates to an obituary for Justin Dean Coleman, published in the *Tampa Bay Times*. The article lists Coleman's surviving family members and includes information on his life before and during his military service.

"Justin Dean Coleman Obituary," *Legacy*, August 1, 2009 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/tampabaytimes/name/justin-coleman-obituary?id=10935192>

An obituary for Coleman on legacy.com, originally published by the *Tampa Bay Times* a week after his death, which lists his surviving family members and briefly details his military service.

Kyle Martin, "Funeral Honors Soldier Killed in Afghanistan," *Tampa Bay Times*, August 4, 2009, 7 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/342559988/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

This article provides an account of Coleman's death and funeral. It includes quotations from friends who spoke at Coleman's funeral, and mentions that the motorcade which transported Coleman's remains to Florida National Cemetery reached two miles long.

"SPC. Coleman's Funeral, Burial Set for Today," *Tampa Bay Times*, August 3, 2009, 41 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331374111/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

A short article announcing that Coleman's funeral and burial at Florida National Cemetery would take place August 3, 2009.

"Solemn Signs of Respect," *Tampa Bay Times*, August 4, 2009, 20 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331375408/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

A paragraph-long article about Coleman's death and funeral. This article includes several photographs which depict Coleman's wife touching his headstone, the headstone itself, soldiers carrying Coleman's casket through Florida National Cemetery, and a military honor guard presenting a US flag to Coleman's father and stepmother.

John Frank, "At Rest Among Fallen," *Tampa Bay Times*, August 4, 2009, 1B (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331374658/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

A newspaper article that describes Coleman's funeral and burial at Florida National Cemetery. It includes photographs of Coleman's widow and his flag-draped casket being carried through the cemetery. The article also mentions that Coleman's mission at the time he was killed involved searching for a missing Army soldier who had been captured by the Taliban.

---, “Hundreds Say Goodbye to Coleman,” *Tampa Bay Times*, August 4, 2009, 8B (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331374849/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman>

The above link navigates to a continuation of the previous article. This continuation includes quotations from several friends and loved ones who spoke at Coleman’s funeral.

Beth N. Gray, “Volunteers Complete Their Tours of Duty,” *Tampa Bay Times*, August 11, 2009, 32 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331351422/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

This article profiles a group of volunteers who bake cookies for the families of Veterans local to the Tampa Bay area. The volunteers are part of a program called Treat the Troops. Justin Dean Coleman is mentioned in the article, as the volunteers had not known that he was serving in Afghanistan until they read about his death. The article uses Coleman’s story to encourage the families of those deployed to let the volunteers know so that they can bake cookies for them. Unfortunately, the article also mentions that due to a lack of time and resources, the volunteers will be ending their baking in the coming weeks.

Kathleen Seyfried, “Fallen Soldier Honored,” *Tampa Bay Times*, October 4, 2009, 31 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331391047/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

A short article and photograph detailing that Coleman’s father and stepmother were invited for dinner at a local Elks Club lodge where they were presented with the Medal of Valor to honor Coleman.

“They Left, but not without Leaving Legacies,” *Tampa Bay Times*, December 31, 2009, 29 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/331899055/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

This article, published on the last day of 2009, lists some of the people local to the Tampa Bay, FL area who had died previously that year. It includes a brief note mentioning Coleman, who died July 24.

Tony Marrero, “Fallen Soldier Isn’t Forgotten,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 17, 2011 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.tampabay.com/archive/2011/06/17/fallen-soldier-isn-t-forgotten/>

The above source is an online article, published by the *Tampa Bay Times*, about two memorial events held in the Tampa Bay area that honored Justin Dean Coleman about two years after his death. The article mentions that shortly before Coleman left on his last mission in Afghanistan, he had posted on social media about his fear of being forgotten if he were to die in service. The article and the memorial events it details ensure that Coleman is not forgotten.

Howard Altman, “Bergdahl Stirs Memories of Son’s Death,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 6, 2014, 9 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/343106734/?terms=Justin%20Dean%20Coleman&match=1>

This article consists of an interview with Coleman’s stepmother in 2014, shortly after Bowe R. Bergdahl was brought back home to the US via a prisoner exchange with the Taliban. Coleman was killed in 2009 while on a mission to locate Bergdahl, who had been captured a few weeks prior. Coleman’s stepmother explains that while her stepson would be happy that Bergdahl was back home, hearing about his return on the news nevertheless made her emotional.

“Honor the Fallen: Army Spc. Justin D. Coleman,” *Military Times*, 2015 (accessed July 25, 2023).

<https://thefallen.militarytimes.com/army-spc-justin-d-coleman/4209146>

Coleman’s memorial page, as part of the *Military Times*’ “Honor the Fallen” section, which honors those who died in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. It includes his birth and death dates and information about his death. Coleman was killed during a firefight in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan.

“Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Casualties,” database, *Fold3* (fold3.com: accessed July 25, 2023), entry for Justin Dean Coleman.

<https://www.fold3.com/record/630020348/justin-dean-coleman-operation-enduring-freedom-oef-casualties>

The Operation Enduring Freedom Casualties Index Record for Justin Dean Coleman details information like Coleman’s birth and death dates, death location, military unit, and hometown in Weeki Wachee, FL.

“U.S., Veterans’ Gravesites, ca. 1775-2019,” database, *Fold3* (fold3.com: accessed July 25, 2023), entry for Justin Dean Coleman.

<https://www.fold3.com/record/715708673/coleman-justin-dean-us-veterans-gravesites-ca1775-2019>

Above is a link to the United States Veterans’ Gravesite record for Justin Dean Coleman, archived in the online database *Fold3*. This source includes information like Coleman’s birthdate and death date, burial location, military rank, and conflict period.

“SPC Justin Dean Coleman,” *FindAGrave*, July 27, 2009 (accessed July 25, 2023).

[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/39939373/justin-dean-coleman?\\_gl=1\\*5iw1jy\\*\\_ga\\*ODA5NDcwNDgyLjE2ODA1NzMwOTU.\\*\\_ga\\_4QT8FMEX30\\*NjFmZGI2ZGMtYTQyNS00NGNiLWEzNmUtMjBIOTY3MzUzNzkxLjMuMS4xNjgwNTgyMjQxLjU0LjAuMA](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/39939373/justin-dean-coleman?_gl=1*5iw1jy*_ga*ODA5NDcwNDgyLjE2ODA1NzMwOTU.*_ga_4QT8FMEX30*NjFmZGI2ZGMtYTQyNS00NGNiLWEzNmUtMjBIOTY3MzUzNzkxLjMuMS4xNjgwNTgyMjQxLjU0LjAuMA)

Justin Dean Coleman’s page on findagrave.com includes information detailing his military service and the circumstances of his death, as well as his burial location at Florida National Cemetery. The page also includes a selection of photographs published by friends and loved ones, which depict Coleman in his army uniform and his headstone. As of July 2023, thirty-six people had left digital flowers on his page, which honor Coleman’s memory and service to his country.

Gus Bilirakis, “Bilirakis Honors Sacrifice of Local Gold Star Family with Bill to Rename Post Office in Brooksville,” *Congressman Gus Bilirakis: Serving Florida’s 12<sup>th</sup> District*, Press Release, March 29, 2023 (accessed July 25, 2023).

[https://bilirakis.house.gov/media/press-releases/bilirakis-honors-sacrifice-local-gold-star-family-bill-  
rename-post-office](https://bilirakis.house.gov/media/press-releases/bilirakis-honors-sacrifice-local-gold-star-family-bill-rename-post-office)

This press release from March 2023 announces that Congressman Gus Bilirakis, who represents Florida’s 12<sup>th</sup> district in the US Congress, filed legislation to rename a post office in Brooksville, FL after Justin Dean Coleman. The press release includes information on Coleman’s death, as well as a quotation from Bilirakis in which he honors Coleman’s legacy.

US Congress, “Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of: Bills and Resolutions,” 2023 (accessed July 25, 2023).

[https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/congressional-record-index/118th-congress/1st-  
session/afghanistan-islamic-republic-of/1878324?s=1&r=10&q=%22A%22](https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/congressional-record-index/118th-congress/1st-session/afghanistan-islamic-republic-of/1878324?s=1&r=10&q=%22A%22)

Legislation filed by Congressman Gus Bilirakis in March 2023 to rename a post office in Brooksville, FL after Justin Dean Coleman was officially passed by the US Congress later that year. This link navigates to a series of bills and resolutions related to US involvement in Afghanistan that were passed during the first session of Congress in 2023, including the designation of the Justin Dean Coleman Memorial Post Office Building.





**Justin Coleman's Headstone in Florida National Cemetery**

UCF Veterans Legacy Program, *Headstone for Justin Coleman*, photograph, 2023, Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell, FL.