

# UCF's Veterans Legacy Program



**VA**



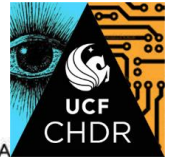
U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration



UCF

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Department  
of History



Randy Lee Billings

1979 – 2013

Chief Warrant Officer 2: US Army

Persian Gulf, Iraq, 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.

“Indiana Soldier among 6 Dead in Afghanistan Crash,” *IndyStar*, December 18, 2013 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/2013/12/18/indiana-soldier-among-6-dead-in-afghanistan-crash/4114475/>

This online article was published by an Indiana news site, and remembers one local soldier, Jesse Lee Williams, who died alongside Randy Lee Billings in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. The article, published just one day after the crash, provides some information on the crash prior to an investigation. It also includes quotations from then-Indiana Governor Mike Pence speaking about the six servicemen who were killed in the crash.

“State Soldier Killed in Crash,” *Daily Oklahoman*, December 20, 2013, 1 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/452833291/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings>

This article, from a newspaper local to Billings’ hometown, identifies Billings as among six who died in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. It also offers information about the military unit he served in. As Billings died shortly before the holiday season, the article encourages Americans to remember the sacrifices made by US military servicemen and servicewomen especially at that time of year.

“Soldier: 1 Survived Helicopter Crash,” *Daily Oklahoman*, December 20, 2013, 2 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/452833293/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings>

This is a continuation of the previous article, on the next page of the same newspaper. It offers more information about the helicopter crash that killed Billings and five other servicemen, and mentions that one soldier survived. The article lists the names of those killed, but does not name the survivor.

“Soldiers Killed in Chopper Crash ID’d,” *Tampa Tribune*, December 20, 2013, 13 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/343100891/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings&match=1>

A note identifying the names of the six soldiers killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan on December 17, 2013. Randy Lee Billings is listed among the dead.

“Soldier from Heavener Dies in Afghanistan,” *Tulsa World*, December 20, 2013, 1 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/911186307/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings>

This article identifies Randy L. Billings as having been killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan three days earlier. It mentions that he served with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division.

“Crash,” *Tulsa World*, December 20, 2013, 4 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/911186341/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings>

A continuation of the previous article, located on a succeeding page in the newspaper. This section of the article provides more information on the helicopter crash that killed Billings and five other servicemen. It also lists the names of the other soldiers killed. They were Joshua B. Silverman, 35; Peter C. Bohler, 29; Omar W. Forde, 28; Jesse L. Williams, 30; and Terry K.D. Gordon, 22.

“Military Deaths, as of 12/22/13,” *Bradenton Herald*, December 22, 2013, A2 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/669277628/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings&match=1>

The above article, from the *Bradenton Herald* in Florida, lists the names of eight soldiers who had died in Afghanistan during the month of December, 2013. Of those eight, six were on the helicopter that crashed December 17, with Billings on board.

“Randy Billings Obituary,” *Legacy*, December 31, 2013 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/chronicleonline/name/randy-billings-obituary?id=17581203>

An obituary for Randy Lee Billings, which lists his surviving family members and details his military service. He had served two deployments in Iraq and two in Afghanistan. The obituary also mentions that Billings’ family asked that donations be made to the Wounded Warrior Project to honor Billings’ legacy.

Amanda Bland, "Family Plans Fla. Services for Soldier," *Daily Oklahoman*, January 3, 2014, 14 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/451568291/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings&match=1>

A brief article detailing Billings' service, during which he spent sixteen years in the US Army. It also lists his surviving family members and mentions that his remains will be buried at Florida National Cemetery.

"Death Notices," *Tulsa World*, January 9, 2014, 10 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/911162823/?terms=Randy%20Lee%20Billings&match=1>

A short note in an Oklahoma newspaper which announces Billings' death, as well as the time and date of his memorial service.

"Six Who Died are Honored," *Tulsa World*, January 10, 2014, 9 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/451578527/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings&match=1>

The above link navigates to an article published nearly a month after Billings' death. It recounts a memorial ceremony held in an Army chapel in Oklahoma to remember the six soldiers who died in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan, including Billings. Nearly 500 people attended the ceremony.

"Community Remembers Fallen Soldier," *ABC 4029 News* (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.4029tv.com/article/community-remembers-fallen-soldier/4951022>

An online article published by a local news station in Poteau, Oklahoma, which was Billings' hometown. It includes a photograph depicting a group of mourners at a memorial ceremony for Billings. It also offers some insight into what kind of person Billings was. Family and friends are quoted in the article as saying that Billings loved animals and loved to travel.

“Killed in Afghanistan,” *Tulsa World*, October 27, 2016, 3 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/911225824/?terms=Randy%20L.%20Billings&match=1>

A list of more than fifty military personnel with Oklahoma roots who had been killed in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2016. Billings is listed among those who died in 2013.

“CW2 Randy Lee Billings Memorial Highway,” *American Legion*, May 31, 2017, accessed July 27, 2023.

<https://www.legion.org/memorials/237632/cw2-randy-lee-billings-memorial-highway>

This online article, from the *American Legion* website, commemorates a highway named after Randy Lee Billings that runs through Poteau, Oklahoma, Billings’ hometown. The highway was designated on November 1, 2016, almost three years after Billings’ death. The article also includes information on his military service, his death in a helicopter crash, and a list of awards he earned. Billings joined the Army in 1997, shortly after graduating high school, and served for sixteen years.

“U.S., Veterans’ Gravesites, ca. 1775-2019,” database, *Fold3* (fold3.com: accessed July 27, 2023), entry for Randy Lee Billings.

<https://www.fold3.com/record/716761417/billings-randy-lee-us-veterans-gravesites-ca1775-2019>

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

“Honor the Fallen: Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Randy L. Billings,” *Military Times*, 2018 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://thefallen.militarytimes.com/army-chief-warrant-officer-2-randy-l-billings/6568534>

This is Billings’ 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. It also lists the other five servicemen who died in the helicopter crash that killed Billings, and mentions that after an investigation, the US Army determined that enemy fire caused the crash.

“Chief Warrant Officer Randy L. Billings,” *Washington Post: Faces of the Fallen*, accessed July 27, 2023.

<https://apps.washingtonpost.com/national/fallen/33116/randy-billings/>

This online memorial page, published by the *Washington Post* as part of their “Faces of the Fallen” segment, includes biographical information on Billings like his hometown, military unit, and place of death.

“Randy L Billings,” *Iraq/Afghanistan War Heroes*, accessed July 27, 2023.

<https://iraqwarheroes.org/2013/billingsrl.htm>

The above link navigates to an online memorial page made to honor Randy L. Billings. It includes information about his death and about the other five soldiers who died alongside him in a helicopter crash. It also details his military rank, unit, and the location of his death, as well as several quotations made by people who had known Billings in the Army.

“The People Behind the Numbers in Afghanistan,” *USA Today*, August 20, 2021 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/pages/interactives/graphics/afghanistan-in-memorial/>

In August 2021, President Joe Biden ordered most US troops out of Afghanistan. To commemorate this, *USA Today* published an online exhibit that includes the names of the nearly 2,500 US service members who died in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel. Billings’ name is included in this exhibit, along with a brief description of his death and military service.

“Kansas Casualties in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom (Iraq/Afghanistan, post-2001),” *Kansas Historical Society*, accessed July 27, 2023.

[https://www.kshs.org/kmi/kmi\\_iraqafghans/view/189](https://www.kshs.org/kmi/kmi_iraqafghans/view/189)

A record of Billings in the Kansas Casualties in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom index. Billings’ wife was from Kansas, and he was stationed there for most of his military career. This record details Billings’ birthdate and death date, his military unit, his hometown, and his place of death.

“CWO Randy Lee Billings,” *FindAGrave*, December 19, 2013 (accessed July 27, 2023).

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/121927415/andy-lee-billings>

Randy Lee Billings’ page on findagrave.com includes information on his birth and death dates, military service, and burial location. It includes a paragraph detailing the circumstances of his death, in which he was killed in a helicopter crash while serving with NATO forces in Afghanistan. The page also includes a list of surviving family members, and a selection of photographs published by friends and loved ones. Some of these photographs depict Billings in his army uniform and some depict his headstone at Florida National Cemetery. As of July 2023, thirty-two people had left digital flowers on his page, which honor Billings’ memory and service to his country.



**Randy Billings's Headstone in Florida National Cemetery**

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

BSM (Bronze Star Medal) & PH (Purple Heart)