

Biographical information

1LT JOSEPH D. HELTON JR.

United States Air Force Academy



USAFA Graduation May 30, 2007



Summer 2003



Summer 2006, Iraq

United States Air Force Academy

Joseph D. Helton Jr. entered the Air Force Academy during the summer of 2002, feeling well-prepared for the experience following four years of AFJROTC in his home town of Monroe, Georgia, under the command of Col. Larry Hoff, USAF, Ret..

He was awarded the 2005 Fall Semester Outstanding Squadron Superintendent. In 2006 he was one of only 18 cadets given the opportunity to experience an active battlefield. He was assigned to the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, from July 3rd to August 2nd, for which he received the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. In the Fall Semester of 2006 he served as Squadron Commander for CS-19. He graduated in 2007 in the top 15% of his class, with Military Distinction. Despite being pilot qualified, he requested placement with Security Forces. His request was granted and he was assigned to the 6th SFS at MacDill AFB, Tampa, Florida.



Helton and his family (top) with Col. Dennis Keegan, ret. at graduation

Training



Security Forces Officer Training

Class 070827

Camp Bullis, TX Dec 2007

AWARDS

Top Gun

Distinguished Graduate

3 Bears Ruck March Award with a time of 43:10

Air and Space Basic Course

Class 08B1

Lackland AFB Feb 2008

AWARDS

Exceptional Performer

MacDill AFB Tampa, Florida



August 2007
Lt. Helton (front, far right)
Flight Commander for the
Groundbreaking Ceremony of
the current 6th Security
Forces Squadron, MacDill
AFB, Florida

Assistant Operations Officer, 6th Security Forces Squadron, 6th Air Mobility Wing,
MacDill Air Force Base

Immediately volunteered for a 365 deployment - was not selected

First certified Incident Commander of the Squadron

Directed security response to three medical and two in-flight emergencies

Leader of the entry team for AirFest 2008

Key contributor for squadron being named Best Large Security Forces Unit in Air
Mobility Command for 2008

Selected as replacement troop based on the recommendation of Capt. Matthew
Ballanco and performance at MacDill

Received the Air Force Commendation Medal (Posthumous) for his Meritorious Service
from 31Jul2007 to 17NOV2008 dated 11SEP2009 by Donald J. Barnes, Colonel,
USAF, Commander 6th Mission Support Group
Purple Heart and Bronze Star (with Valor) (Posthumous)

Deployment



Renegade Officers June 2009
(L-R) Lt Steve Benson,
Lt Chris Snell,
Maj. Nathan Schalles
Lt. Joseph Helton

Fort Bliss Combat Training with Det 2 , Nov 20, 2008 - Jan 25, 2009

Boots on the ground January 31, 2009

Assigned to Det 3 as

Police transition Team Flight Commander, 732d Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, 732d Air Expeditionary Group, 332 Air Expeditionary Wing, Mahmoudiyah, Baghdad, Iraq

Det 3 31 JAN 2009 – 30 AUG 2009, then volunteered to remain behind filling similar position with Det 2

Det 2 30 AUG 2009 – 08 SEP 2009

Lt. Helton Stats per Bronze Star Medal (with Valor) Citation

Leading 51 Security Forces

Covering approximately 1,000 Square Miles

Protecting over 1 Million Citizens

Training and Developing 46 Iraqi Police Stations

44 Missions and 220 Hours "Outside the Wire"

Det 3 Stats January - September

111 Warrants Served

1812 Combat Missions

392 Foot Patrols

Training and 73% reduction in Violence

Developing 27 Iraqi police Stations

40 SIGACTS



MEMORIALS

Camp Bullis



Camp Bullis, TX

Dedication Ceremony May 2010



The first memorial was established by Lt. Helton's peers, who acquired the necessary authorizations as well as personally paying for the memorial themselves. Placed near the entrance to the Dining Hall at Camp Bullis, Tx, it is said to serve as a daily inspiration to defenders in training and their instructors. A number of troops from both Det 2 and Det 3 attended the ceremony, many of whom met with the Helton Family later that evening in San Antonio. During the same period, fellow airmen in Iraq renamed the road P. T. Circle to Helton Hwy.

In 2011 Col. Gregory J. Reese, Commander 37th Training Group renamed the Security Forces Basic Officer Course Leadership Award in memory of Lt. Helton for the graduating class on 19 August 2011. The Leadership Award is presented to the student in each graduating class who demonstrates the highest standards of loyalty, dedication, and superior leadership during the course, and is selected by the class. Lt. Helton's mother was invited to attend and present the award to the winning student.

There are now four graduating classes per year. In 2017 the Lt. Helton Memorial Foundation began providing a statuette of Lt. Helton to be mounted for the award. Lt. Helton's mother, Jiffy Helton Sarver, is often at graduation to personally present the award.

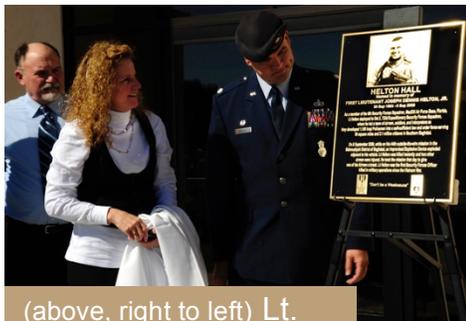
Lt. C. J. Perotta
with "Flat Joe" and
Lt. Helton Leadership Award



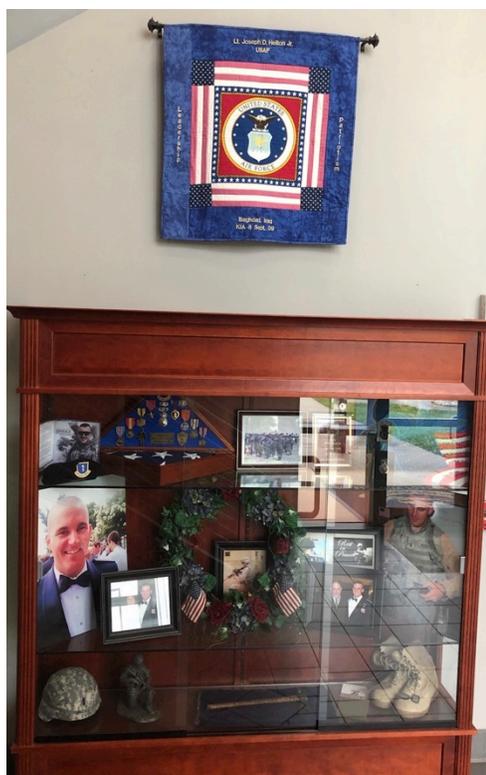
MEMORIALS MacDill AFB



MacDill AFB, Tampa, Florida
6th Security Forces Squadron
Dedication Ceremony 03 December 2010



(above, right to left) Lt. Helton's parents Joey Helton, Jiffy Helton, and Col. Ohlson admire the plaque placed by the entrance to Helton Hall (right).



Soon after Lt. Helton's arrival to MacDill AFB in 2007, he had served as Troop Commander for the groundbreaking ceremony for what was to be the new home of the 6th SFS. In his speech at Helton Hall's Dedication in December of 2010, Lt. Col Brent French noted that it seemed fitting therefore to name the building after Lt. Helton who had been extremely humble despite his many gifts. "Defenders working here are actually working in a living memorial, and we have the opportunity to help them develop and fit into the sterling mold of integrity and service before self that Lieutenant Helton has offered."

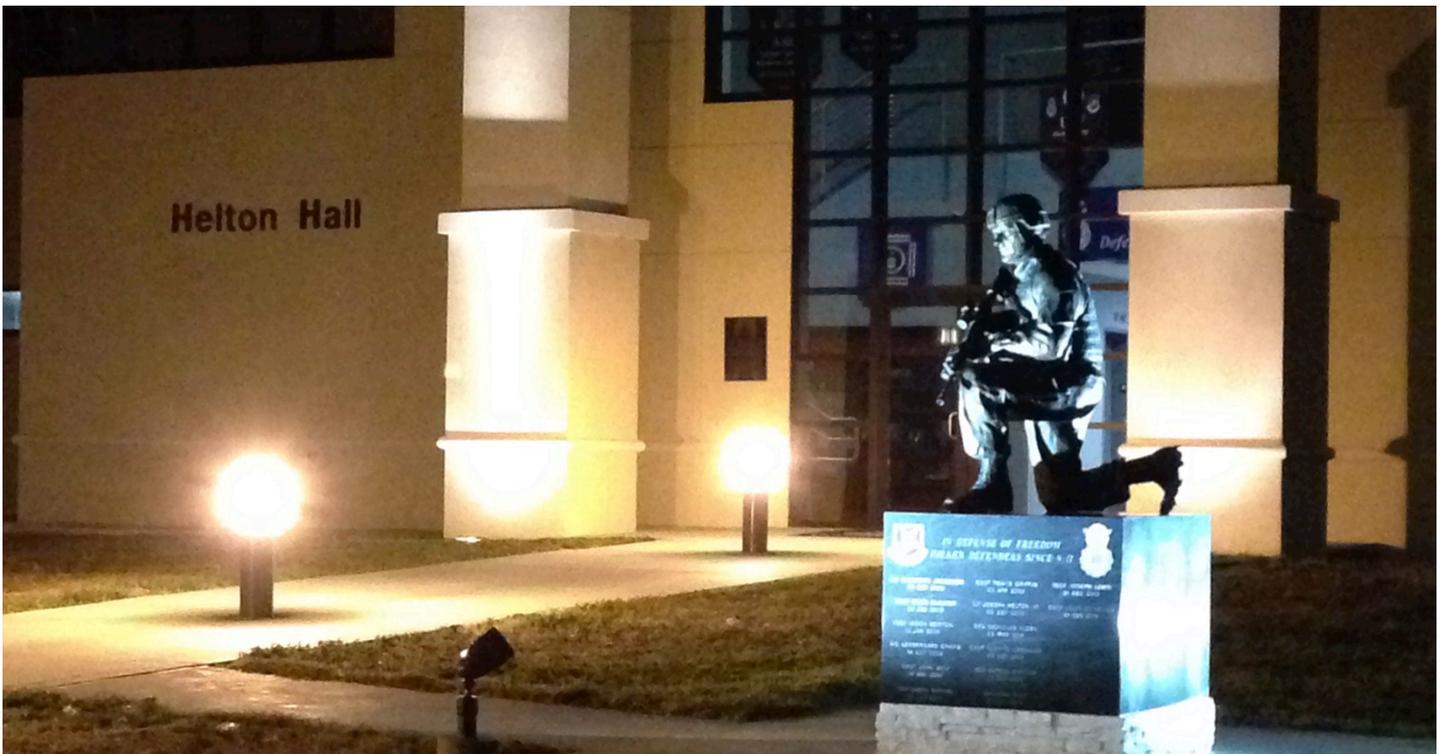
Inside the doors a two-story foyer full of natural light holds a display case of memorabilia: a picture of the groundbreaking, a flag with Lt. Helton's medals, a hatchet that Col Schalles gave to each of his Det 3 lieutenants, Helton's beret, battlefield helmet, size 13 boots, and a variety of pictures. Above the display case is a quilted wall hanging made for the family, who felt it was better served hanging in a place where it could be shared by many.

MEMORIALS

MacDill - continued



MacDill AFB, Tampa, Florida
“In Defense of Freedom”
Dedication Ceremony 31 January 2017



In September of 2015, at the annual Helton Haul formation run done in memory of the Fallen Security Forces, Jiffy Helton approached the Commander of the 6th Security Forces with a proposal to place a memorial near the entrance of the building to be called “In Defense of Freedom” in honor of all Fallen Security Forces. This would be a brother to the statue that the Helton Foundation commissioned Colorado Springs artist Michael Garman to create from pictures taken of Lt. Helton during a warrant mission in Iraq. The project would be done at no cost to the government.

Col. Schalles, who had been one of Helton’s commanding officers in Iraq and was now Commander of the 6th SFS, was very receptive, as was the base Commander. The foundry costs to produce the statue were covered by Lt. Helton’s sponsor from the Air Force Academy, Dennis Keegan (USAF Col, ret). Tom Burkett of Troop Rewards donated funds to cover the pedestal and etching. Dick Danner and Ted Freeman of Danner Construction donated the sidewalks, base, and trim as well as the concrete and labor. Local companies donated electrical work and lights.

A dedication ceremony was held January 31, 2017 with a large number of family, donors, civilians and military in attendance.

MEMORIALS

Monroe



Under pressure from Lt. Helton's High School AfJROTC Commander and his Academy sponsor to create a memorial to her son, coupled with so many sending the family money, Lt. Helton's mother created the Lt. Helton Memorial Foundation and applied for 501c(3) status in 2010. On September 13th of 2013, while at Helton Hall, she was notified by the CPA that the non-profit status was granted.

Fundraising began with the intent to create a memorial to Walton County's Fallen military and first responders. A miniature of what the statue would look like (Maquette) was commissioned and delivered. The search for an appropriate location began.



Hearing of the Foundation's plans, Walton County Commissioner Kevin Little approached Helton's mother with an idea of building a Walton County Veterans Memorial, offering space in an area they would call the Memorial Gardens for the statue. In January of 2015 it was proposed that the park would be finished by November of 2015. Artist Mike Garman was given the go-ahead to turn the Maquette into a full-sized bronze.

The statue was delivered to the Foundation's annual Fundraiser in May of 2016, and unveiled at the conclusion of the race. It was

then moved into the Walton County Government Building lobby to be on display awaiting installation.



A small area in the future park was landscaped and a temporary structure erected to mount the statue. The idea was to show those who had already donated that there was progress. It was also hoped that seeing the statue outside the courthouse would help to spark the business community and generate the donations needed to begin serious construction.



MEMORIALS

Monroe - continued



In January of 2017, just as the Memorial project at MacDill was being dedicated, construction at the Walton County Veterans Memorial was still stalled. One year later, however, work began in earnest. The statue was taken down and put back inside the government building.

A granite pedestal was ordered and the wording to be etched was finalized. The brick structure the statue had been on was demolished, and a concrete base was poured that would support the weight of the new granite pedestal. Sidewalks were added to enable visitors walk up to and around the memorial.

In September installation of the large granite pieces began, and by November 2018 the Walton County Veterans Memorial was complete and a dedication ceremony was well attended. A video of the park's construction can be viewed here: [Walton County Veterans Memorial](#)





Joseph always had an interest in the military, with drawings of fighter jets, battle ships, and soldiers making up the bulk of the subject matter as he learned the use of crayons.

He showed an interest in the AFJROTC in the 8th grade, as the AFJROTC Commander was also the soccer coach, and Joseph played on the JV team. He was actively involved in the JROTC program throughout high school. Thus, was my surprise when, during Open House of his senior year, I was informed by Col. Larry Hoff (USAF, ret.) that I been discouraging Joseph from applying to the Air Force Academy. Without comment, I went home to discuss this with Joseph.

He explained that he thought he needed to remain near home to help take care of his sisters, as his father had filed for divorce and moved Washington State in December of 2000 (we lived in Georgia).

When asked, he said he really had no idea what career he wanted to pursue, though he had always been interested in the Military. We discussed the obvious potential risks that were involved with a military career. The political climate was heating up Iraq, and we talked about the possibility of war and a draft. Finally, I said the decision was his to make, but that his sisters were my responsibility and he had to chose what was best for him and his own career.

He began his applications to senators and representatives, to the Air Force Academy and West Point. In going through his belongings to find supporting documentation for information contained within these pages, I also found acceptance certificates to the University of Tennessee, Georgia Tech, and Georgia Southwestern, as he had also been awarded an ROTC scholarship to the school of his chosing. (We also found several award certificates we knew nothing about.) Rep. John Linder gave him his choice of commission. He chose the Air Force.

The rest, as they say, is history. Don't be a Weaksauce!

Jennifer Helton Sarver

July 9, 2019, updated May 5, 2023