



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Jack Bradley's Speech For His Son Sgt. Mark Bradley of Cuba, NY

CATHARINE YOUNG November 14, 2011

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Here is a speech delivered on Friday, November 11, 2011 by Jack Bradley, father of Marine Corps Sergeant Mark Bradley of Cuba, NY who was killed in June in Afghanistan. Mr. Bradley gave the speech during a special Veteran's Day ceremony in honor of his son held at Cuba Park.

BY JACK BRADLEY:

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the family of Sgt Mark Bradley, his wonderful wife, Samantha, and my wife, Sharon, I'd like to thank you for sharing your day with us on this Veteran's Day and allowing me to share Mark's story.

I was invited to speak to you today about my son, Sgt Mark Bradley, but before I do, I want to thank the community of Cuba for the amazing support given in honor of Mark. We are constantly in awe at the cards, letters and prayer groups from all over the country that reached out to us from the time Mark was wounded and continue to this day. It's been overwhelming and very much appreciated.

As you all probably know, Mark was a graduate of Cuba-Rushford Central School Class of 2003. Even though we traveled and settled in various locations in the US, Mark always called Cuba his home. After graduation, in Jan 2004, Mark followed his calling in life when he joined the Marine Corps with his best friend, Steve Westfall. Mark trained to become an O311 Rifleman, more affectionately known as a "Grunt". He fit right in. There wasn't anything he wouldn't do and quickly earned the respect from his squad leaders and platoon sergeants.

Between 2004 and 2011, Mark deployed 4 times, once to Iraq's western Anbar province, twice as part of a Marine Expeditionary Unit, and even a humanitarian deployment to Haiti. In the Fall of 2010, Mark was selected through a rigorous selection process to attend and successfully complete the Marine Corps Scout Sniper School, fulfilling his dream since childhood.

In early 2011, assigned to the 3rd Battalion /2nd Marine Regiment / 2nd Marine Division's Scout-Sniper Platoon, Mark deployed to Afghanistan's Helmand Province in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. On June 3rd, the night Mark was wounded, his eight-man Scout-Sniper Section was executing an ambush patrol with Mark acting as the assistant patrol leader. The Section had split into two four-man elements, with Mark leading the

southern element. At approximately 9:15PM, Mark identified movement and white lights south of his position that were indicative of enemy forces trying to re-emplace an IED in an area that Mark and his Marines had previously occupied. The two elements regrouped and began pushing south to maneuver on the enemy. As the team began to move, indications of enemy activity ceased, so the patrol leader made the call to continue back to their home base.

Soon after, Mark again spotted enemy personnel attempting to maneuver on the Marines latest position. As Mark instinctively began to move to terrain that would support an ambush on the enemy forces, he struck an IED. Mark sustained severe injuries to his lower body and left arm, but his team provided miraculous first aid buying time so that a helicopter could MEDIVAC him to the next echelon of care. From that moment, for the next thirteen days and three additional trauma centers, Mark fought the good fight to stay alive. His struggle tragically but peacefully ended at 1:50AM on June 16, 2011 at Bethesda Naval Hospital with his wife Samantha, his mother and me at his bedside.

As a parent, what you hope for your children is that they become a respected person, with a good set of values, integrity in their actions, a love for life and a satisfying career. With Mark, we hit a homerun. In his short time on this earth, Mark lived a life more fulfilling than most people experience in a life three times as long. As hard as it was to lose him, I take comfort in knowing that he was doing what he always wanted to do, with a brotherhood of his fellow Marines that can only be appreciated by those who have served and share the bond that comes from similar experience.

To gauge the son and Marine Mark had become, I'd like to read you some excerpts from a letter I received from Captain Mike Mulvaney, the Commanding Officer of India Company, who Mark's Sniper Team was assigned to support.

I quote, “Mark’s performance, whether in training or in the hills of northern Musa Qa’leh, Afghanistan did nothing but reinforce his professional reputation, character, enthusiasm and dedication for his Marines and his mission. The relationship that our Company enjoys with the Scout Sniper Section that supported us is in no small part due to the efforts of Mark and his history with the Marines here. Mark knew several of the Marines personally, and the missions he was tasked with or was ordered to support were always met with eagerness, a smile, and an enthusiasm that put everyone at ease. He knew the men he was going to combat with, and they in turn had a tremendous trust in Mark as he supported their missions and worked together in several tough situations”.

Capt Mulvaney further stated “I have done my best to shape this company as a brotherhood. Mark and the bonds he shared with Steven as well as the rest of the Marines he fought with ultimately defined this. If I mention Sgt. Mark Bradley to any Marine in this company, you’ll hear instant reflections of a selfless, dedicated and fun-loving man whose purpose in life was defined by the bonds and the experiences he shared with the Marines of his platoon, and his family. The men miss Mark deeply, but they also wouldn’t have wanted anyone else other than Sgt Mark Bradley out there with them that night. When I think of Mark, I will recall nothing but the smile and his enthusiasm for what he did as a Marine and those he surrounded himself with. The memories of Mark will live on proudly in every Marine in this Company”. End quote...

Today, I’d like to personally thank the American Legion, the AMVETS, the Cuba VFW and Murdock’s for their overwhelming generosity to Mark’s family. I’d also like extend my appreciation to Mr. Gary Wight for handling the local media centers as Mark’s story progressed. I know how much you love the attention! To the community as a whole, I can’t thank you enough for the gestures – the flag stone and bricks at the flag downtown honoring Mark are awesome; but most of all, I want to thank my brother Jim and his lovely

wife Kathi for all they have done to support our family through the tough times.

In closing, I ask that you never forget that all of the freedoms we enjoy come at great sacrifice and must be cherished and protected each and every day. Thank you all for allowing me to take part in Mark's hometown Veterans Day Celebration, but more importantly thank YOU for being here today to honor our Nation's veterans, fallen sons and heroes.