



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Honoring a Local Hero: Senator Murphy Hosts Dedication Ceremony for the Major Clayton Carpenter Memorial Highway

TERRENCE MURPHY September 18, 2017

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Yorktown, NY - With Senator Terrence Murphy and Colette Carpenter marching in the forefront, the gleaming motorcycles of the New York Riders and the keening bagpipes of the Westchester Police Emerald Society guided a procession of Major Clayton Carpenter's family, friends, and peers down the road that would soon be dedicated in his honor. A pilot and a local hero who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, Major Carpenter tragically lost his life on

January 14, 2014. In 2016, Senator Murphy sponsored a bill to name a portion of Route 118 in Yorktown the Army Major Clayton Carpenter Memorial Highway. The dedication ceremony in Major Carpenter's honor held on September 16th brought together a community in celebration of his bravery, peerless service, and the love he had for his family and community.

"A hero is someone who is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect others. Clayton Carpenter exemplifies that description," said Senator Murphy. "Many of us never get the chance to fulfill our dreams. Major Carpenter did, becoming a highly decorated helicopter pilot. But pursuing his passion was not without risk. Major Carpenter willingly made the ultimate sacrifice while serving his country. By naming a highway near his mother's home in his honor, we will never forget Major Carpenter's love for his community and his service to his country."



Major Carpenter's mother, Colette, said, "I want to thank Senator Murphy for sponsoring the bill dedicating this road in memory of my son. We all know Senator Murphy is a warrior for the military - he gets things done. Clay's life was cut short by corporate greed and negligence. But he led a rich life, and was dedicated to his nation, family, friends, church, and to the men and women of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. When I drive down the Major Clayton Carpenter Memorial Highway I'll be thinking about the little boy who grew into an outstanding young man and the sacrifice he made, as well as the sacrifices that all the sons, fathers, mothers and daughters have made to protect this great nation."

Yorktown Police Chief Robert Noble served as Master of Ceremonies for the event. "Many of you knew Major Clayton Carpenter," he said. "The crowd assembled here today is a testament to the effect Clay had on all those who had the pleasure to know him. Today we are here to honor his memory and his legacy."

Captain Amy Daschle, a friend and classmate of Clayton's at West Point said, "Even though it has been three years since he left us, it's still difficult to talk about Clayton in the past tense. He was a tremendous and loyal friend with an enormous heart. He had a remarkable and adventurous spirit that was mixed with quiet sincerity and his dedication to doing the right thing. I'll always remember him, especially as I drive up the Major Clayton Carpenter Memorial Highway during my visits home."

"As a senior at West Point, Clayton was selected to be a Battalion Commander. That's perhaps the sixth highest position in the entire United States' Corps of Cadets," noted Major Joe Davis. "It was there that I witnessed his dedication to the care of those he was asked to serve. No task he or his unit was asked to complete went unfulfilled. No cadet, no soldier went unnoticed. Clay completely believed in the team and that concept followed him his entire life."

Choking back the tears, Captain Art Eusebio commented, "He had wit, charisma, and was possessed of an amazing moral compass. He was always the smartest person in the room, but he never made me feel like a lesser human being. All he was ever interested in was that I was successful. Clay believed that you don't measure a man by the size of his brain, but by the size of his heart."

Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CW4) Jon Ternstrom was in the helicopter with Clayton Carpenter when it crashed. He gave a gripping account of the last moments before the accident, highlighting Clayton's bravery in the face of imminent disaster. "As we were making our final approach we lost thrust in our tail rotor and went into an unrecoverable spin. Major Carpenter was able to cut power to the engines and cut the fuel supply. His thoroughness and attention to detail prevented a post-crash fire. If he hadn't taken those steps, I wouldn't be standing here today. Our flight was destined for failure well before we left the ground. A contractor had failed to put a cotter pin in the tail rotor and the emergency locator in Major Carpenter's seat failed to function. No one protecting the freedom of our country should have to give their life because of defective equipment. But because of Major Carpenter's sacrifice, there have been many changes made that have saved thousands of aviators."

The Yorktown American Legion gave the presentation of the colors. Master Sergeant Mary Kay Messenger performed a rousing performance of the National Anthem and concluded the ceremony with a moving rendition of "God Bless America." Chaplain Major Dave Dice gave the invocation and West Point Garrison Captain CH (LTC) Robert E. Marsi gave the benediction.

Among the many friends of the family, guests and members of the community in attendance were the Gold Star Mothers, Westchester County Legislator John Testa, Yorktown Town Supervisor Michael Grace, Yorktown Town Councilmen Tom Diana, Ed Lachterman and

Vishnu Patel, and Yorktown Highway Superintendent Dave Paganelli.

Clayton Carpenter was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 12, 1983, as the first son to Paul Douglas and Colette Carpenter. The Carpenter's moved to Cortlandt Manor in 1992, where Clayton quickly became a role model for other children. From early on, he demonstrated his drive for excellence by earning brown belt in karate. An accomplished athlete, Clayton was twice named team captain of Lakeland High School's boys' track and field team. At 16, he was one of the youngest candidates to pass the EMT examination. He was in the National Honor Society and graduated fifth in his class from Lakeland High School in 2001.

Nominated by former Vice President Al Gore and U. S. Representative Sue W. Kelly, Clayton accepted an appointment into the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in February 2001, where he graduated with a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Engineering Psychology in 2005. After being commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, Clay was assigned to Fort Rucker, Alabama, for Initial Entry Rotary Wing Training.

After completing his training, Clayton was assigned to Second Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii, and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in June of 2008. He further served in Iraq as a Headquarters Company Commander and did a second tour of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in September of 2011. In September 2012, he earned a place as special operations helicopter platoon leader for the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment Night Stalkers, an elite operations unit that flies missions behind enemy lines.

Clayton Carpenter flew his final mission on January 15, 2014 when his Blackhawk helicopter crashed during a training mission in Savannah, Georgia. At the time of his death, Clayton Carpenter was a Captain. He was posthumously promoted to Major and awarded his second

Meritorious Service Medal. He was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery on March 5, 2014.

Clayton Carpenter's many awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Meritorious Unit Citation, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, and a NATO Medal.