

A Texas Goodbye

[Editor's Note: Texas Governor Greg Abbott proclaimed this week that February 2 is Chris Kyle Day in honor of Chief Petty Officer Chris Kyle. A native Texan and Navy SEAL who served four tours in Iraq, Kyle is recognized as the most lethal sniper in United States military history. I do not know who is responsible for the article below. It was sent in an email to me this week. Ordinarily, I will not print an anonymous letter. However, this one reveals the true Texas spirit of love, compassion, and honor. If you have not seen the movie American Sniper, I urge you to take the time. It is worth the effort.]

This is why America will remain strong. We take care of our own as well as others who may not deserve taking care of. I just wanted to share with you all that out of a horrible tragedy we were blessed by so many people.

Chris Kyle was Derek's teammate through 10 years of training and battle. They both suffer/suffered from PTSD to some extent and took great care of each other because of it.

2006 in Ramadi was horrible for young men that never had any more aggressive physical contact with another human than on a Texas football field.

They lost many friends. Chris became the armed services number #1 sniper of all time. Not something he was happy about, other than the fact that in so doing, he saved a lot of American lives.

Three years ago, his wife Taya asked him to leave the SEAL teams as he had a huge bounty on his head by Al Qaeda. He did and wrote the book "The American Sniper." 100% of the proceeds from the book went to two of the SEAL families who had lost their sons in Iraq.

That was the kind of guy Chris was. He formed a company in Dallas to train military, police and I think firemen as far as protecting themselves in difficult situations. He also formed a foundation to work with military people suffering from PTSD. Chris was a giver not a taker.

He, along with a friend and neighbor, Chad Littlefield, were murdered trying to help a young man that had served six months in Iraq and claimed to have PTSD.

Now I need to tell you about all of the blessings.

Southwest Airlines flew in any SEAL and their family from any airport they flew into free of charge.

The employees donated buddy passes and one lady worked for four days without much of a break to see that it happened.

Volunteers were at both airports in Dallas to drive them to the hotel.

The Marriott Hotel reduced their rates to \$45 a night and cleared the hotel for only SEALs and family.

The Midlothian, TX Police Department paid the \$45 a night for each room. I would guess there were about 200 people staying at the hotel, 100 of them

were SEALs. Two large buses were chartered (an unknown donor paid the bill) to transport people to the different events and they also had a few rental cars (donated). The police and secret service were on duty 24 hours during the stay at our hotel.

At the Kyle house, the Texas DPS parked a large motor home in front to block the view from reporters. It remained there the entire five days for the SEALs to congregate in and all to use the restroom so as not to have to go in the house. Taya, their two small children and both sets of parents were staying in the home.

Only a hand full of SEALs went into the home as they had different duties and meetings were held sometimes on a hourly basis. It was a huge coordination of many different events and security. Derek was assigned to be a Pall Bearer, to escort Chris' body when it was transferred from the Midlothian Funeral Home to the Arlington Funeral Home, and to be with Taya. A tough job.

Taya seldom came out of her bedroom. The house was full with people from the church and other family members that would come each day to help. I spent one morning in a bedroom with Chris' mom and the next morning with Chad Littlefield's parents (the other man murdered with Chris). A tough job.

George W Bush and his wife Laura met and talked to everyone on the Seal Team one on one. They went behind closed doors with Taya for quite a while. They had prayer with us all. You can tell when people were sincere and caring

Nolan Ryan sent his cooking team, a huge grill and lots of steaks, chicken and hamburgers. They set up in the front yard and fed people all day long including the 200 SEALs and their families. The next day a local BBQ restaurant set up a buffet in front of the house and fed all once again. Food was plentiful and all were taken care of. The family's church kept those inside the house well fed.

Jerry Jones, the man everyone loves to hate, was a rock star. He made sure that we all were taken

care of. His wife and he were just making sure everyone was taken care of....Class... He donated the use of Cowboy Stadium for the services as it was determined that so many wanted to attend.

The charter buses transported us to the stadium on Monday at 10:30 am. Every car, bus, motorcycle was searched with bomb dogs and police. I am not sure if kooks were making threats trying to make a name for themselves or if so many SEALs in one place was a security risk, I don't know. We willingly obliged. No purses went into the stadium!

We were taken to The Legends room high up and a large buffet was available. That was for about 300 people. We were growing.

A Medal of Honor recipient was there, lots of secret service and police and Sarah Palin and her husband. She looked nice; this was a very formal military service.

The service started at 1:00 pm and when we were escorted onto the field I was shocked. We heard that about 10,000 people had come to attend also. They were seated in the stadium seats behind us. It was a beautiful and emotional service.

The Bagpipe and drum corps were wonderful and the Texas A&M men's choir stood through the entire service and sang right at the end. We were all in tears.

The next day was the 200-mile procession from Midlothian, TX to Austin for burial. It was a cold, drizzly, windy day, but the people were out. We had dozens of police motorcycles riders, freedom riders, five chartered buses and lots of cars. You had to have a pass to be in the procession and still it was huge. Two helicopters circled the procession with snipers sitting out the side door for protection. It was the longest funeral procession ever in the state of Texas. People were everywhere. The entire route was shut down ahead of us, the people were lined up on the side of the road the entire way. Firemen were down on one knee, police officers were holding their hats over their

hearts, children waving flags, veterans saluting as we went by. Every bridge had fire trucks with large flags displayed from their tall ladders, people all along the entire 200 miles were standing in the cold weather. It was so heartwarming. Taya rode in the hearse with Chris' body so Derek rode the route with us. I was so grateful to have that time with him.

The service was at Texas National Cemetery. Very few are buried there and you have to apply to get in. It is like people from the Civil War, Medal of Honor winners, a few from the Alamo and all the historical people of Texas. It was a nice service and the Freedom Riders surrounded the outside of the entire cemetery to keep the crazy church people from Kansas that protest at military funerals away from us.

Each SEAL put his Trident (metal SEAL badge) on the top of Chris' casket, one at a time. A lot hit it in with one blow. Derek was the only one to take four taps to put his in and it was almost like he

was caressing it as he did it. Another tearful moment. After the service Governor Rick Perry and his wife, Anita, invited us to the governor's mansion. She stood at the door, greeted each of us individually, and gave each of the SEALs a coin of Texas. She was a sincere, compassionate, and gracious hostess.

We were able to tour the ground floor and then went into the garden for beverages and BBQ. So many of the Seal team guys said that after they get out they are moving to Texas. They remarked that they had never felt so much love and hospitality. The charter buses then took the guys to the airport to catch their returning flights. Derek just now called and after a 20 hours flight he is back in his spot, in a dangerous land on the other side of the world, protecting America.

We just wanted to share with you, the events of a quite emotional, but blessed week.

To this day, no one in the White House has ever acknowledged Chris Kyle.



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