



Stephen Philip "Butch" Freeman

July 27, 1966 - January 25, 2006

Stephen P. "Butch" Freeman

Stephen Philip Freeman was born July 27, 1966. He entered into the presence of his heavenly Father January 25, 2006.

He is survived by the love of his life, wife Sherry and two precious children, Hannah Claire age 3 and Stephen Nicholas age 1; grandfather J. Philip Davis Sr.; parents Tom and Patsy Freeman; brothers Bryan and Ernest and wife Kim. His immediate family includes an aunt, Janet Stautz and husband David of Dallas, uncles Phil Davis and wife Rene of Temple and John Phelp and wife Kate of Hilton Head, S.C. His extended family included the thousands of lives he touched throughout his 39 ½ years.

Stephen grew up in Huntsville and was known by the community as Butch. He was probably the most fun loving product of Little Red School House, First Baptist, and HHS. In 1991 he graduated from Baylor University where he became, as the USMC described, "locked on," with the burning desire to become a jet fighter pilot with the premier defender of our nation's freedom – The United States Marine Corps.

He graduated with top honors from basic flight instruction in Pensacola, Florida and later trained at Naval and Marine installations throughout the U.S.

and on foreign soils. His Mom had the honor of pinning his Wings of Gold at NAS Meridian, MS in 1995.

In the Corps Butch was identified as one of the best of the best not only as a pilot, but also as a true “leatherneck.” Yet, with all of the ‘toughness’ often associated with being a Marine, there was a soft side to Butch. He loved and cared about everyone with whom he became connected. In his San Diego neighborhood he was known as the ‘go to guy’ when anyone needed a helping hand. His acts and deeds of charity in assisting those in need are countless. His last flying mission in Alaska was exemplar of this love for his fellow man.

After his untimely medical retirement from the Marine Corps, Butch wasn’t satisfied with not being a pilot. In 2004 he graduated president of his class from the Federal Law Enforcement Academy in Georgia and joined the flight division of the U.S. Customs. If ever there was a man who truly loved his vocation, it was Butch Freeman.

“Montana”, the call sign he used as a Customs pilot, has been described by his peers as fun loving, a jokester, one who was the life of a party, made others laugh, could pull a joke on his buddies, or take a joke. His magnetic personality made everyone he met truly love Butch.

He truly loved life and could squeeze more than 60 seconds out of every minute. With all his fun and laughter and his Marine Corps toughness, he truly had his priorities in order...God, Family, Country.

Though he traveled across the face of the earth, as per his wishes, he will be laid to rest with military honors in the area he always called home; Red Top Cemetery in the woods of Grimes County.

Pallbearers include brothers Ernest and Bryan, brother-in-law Robert Patrick of Birmingham, Alabama, nephew Micah Best of Gulf Port, Mississippi, long time friends J.C. Cooper, Mike Daudet of San Diego, California, Marcus Nelson of Louisville, Kentucky and Rob Johnson of Pensacola, Florida.

Services will be held at the First Baptist Church at 2pm Friday, February 3, 2006, Pastor David Valentine officiating, under the direction of Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home. The family will receive guests at the Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home from 6:30pm until 8:30pm on Thursday, February 2, 2006.

A College America 529 Education Plan for the benefit of Butch Freeman's two minor children has been established at Edward Jones Investments Co. Those wishing to contribute may do so by making a check payable to "Edward Jones Investments FBO Freeman children", and forward the donation to the local Edward Jones firm, ATTN: Tommy Stewart, 253 Hwy 75 N, Huntsville, TX 77320.

Memorial condolences may be made to the family online at www.shmfh.com

Tribute Wall



“ *Stephen Philip "Butch" Freeman*

November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM

“ I don't really know where to start. The thought of Stephen Freeman has resonated in the back of my mind so quietly, for so long, that I guess I finally felt the need to just, I don't know, talk a little bit about him. Back in the early '00's he was the OIC of our shop over at VMFAT-101, I was a young, enlisted Aviation Life Support Tech. I worked for him and interacted with him nearly everyday for close to three years.

As far as chain of command and life experience goes, I was just getting started. Captain Freeman, however, was a true seasoned cowboy, the epitome of what it meant to be a Marine Corps Aviator. He always had time, or rather, made the time to chat, to inspire, to build confidence in young Marines like myself. My memories of his infectious smile and commanding, yet easy going presence have been a constant source of inspiration.

My last memory of Captain Freeman is by far my finest. It was late '05, I had previously completed my enlistment near the end of '04, so I was a year removed from active duty. I was a civilian, a young twenty five year old bachelor trying hard to get by as a civilian in San Diego. I was doing my laundry at a local laundromat, next door was an Irish Pub called the Blarney Stone.

Well, to say I didn't have much cash on me that day would be an understatement, hell I had barely enough to get the laundry done. But like most 25 year olds, I was able to justify a few bucks for a cold pint while I waited for my laundry to finish. Indeed, I found myself seated next door, enjoying a beer while watching to a young woman strum her guitar and sing folk songs on a small stage in the corner of the bar. Anyways, long story short, in comes Captain Freeman, boisterous as ever beaming from ear to ear. Now, San Diego is obviously a big city, lots of little neighborhoods, with far too many bars to count and of all the places I could have ended up that afternoon, in here walks in Freeman.

It was a great reunion, he was as excited to see me as I was him.

Over the next hour he bought me probably four rounds and we had a truly wonderful conversation; one about family, Corps and our civilian lives. I can't even begin to tell you what a great feeling it was to run into him like that, it was such a rare happenstance, a treasured moment of what it meant to be a Marine and a friend.

I found out a few weeks later there had been an accident. I couldn't believe it, I had just seen him, he had just walked in out of nowhere, then like the breeze he flew in on, he was gone.

Thank you Stephen Freeman, you are not forgotten.

Chris R Campbell - December 21, 2015 at 09:05 PM

JC

“*Dear Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, Sherry, Bryan, and Ernest, and families: I am so sorry for your unexpected loss. Butch was such a vibrant, energetic person. His fun-loving personality is a treasured memory of my growing up in Huntsville schools and is probably the main reason that it is so hard for me to believe that he is no longer with us. My thoughts and prayers continue to be with you all and with Butch's own family. He will be missed.*

Jocelyn del Carmen - March 01, 2006 at 03:08 PM

MC

“ I just found out last night that "Butch" passed away just under a month ago. I was a good friend of his through The Basic School (TBS) and roommates with him at fight school. I had lost track of him when he went to the west coast and I went to the east coast. I would like to get in contact with his Mother & Father (Tom and Patsy) and also his wife (Sherry). I have lots of pictures of us when we were going through training. I think his family would like to have them. Could you please forward this email or give me their mailing addresses and I will send them a letter with the pictures.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely, Major Joseph Courey

Major Joseph Courey - February 17, 2006 at 10:30 AM

NS

“ My deepest sympathy to the Freeman & Patrick families. I did not know "Butch" personally, however I got to know him through his father-in-law "Smokey" Patrick, who was very proud of him. Sherry, my heart goes out to you and your children. May God hold you in the palm of his hand during this difficult time.

Neil Sharpe - February 07, 2006 at 06:53 PM

MH

“ To the Freeman family: Our hearts & prayers go out to you on this terrible loss. In reading all the condolences on this site, it is easy to see that Major Freeman was a "very special" person to many many people. My wife and I did not personally know your son - husband - father. We live in Alaska and only came to know about Major Freeman through this most unfortunate accident. Upon viewing Stephen's photo in a local newspaper and on television, we instantly saw this was a man of charisma and character. You can see that in his eyes. The touching testimony that Stephen's friend David Riggs shared with Alaskan residents throughout our state, only confirmed this belief. Being Christians ourselves, Joleen and I look forward to someday personally meeting your son on the other side. Major Stephen Freeman is a true HERO to the country. May GOD bless this family and help heal their pain!

Mike & Joleen Hankins - February 06, 2006 at 08:23 PM

KM

“ Dear Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, Bryan, Ernest, Sherry and family, Butch was truly the class favorite. There's not a school memory I have where Butch isn't associated. And all of the associations make me smile. In 6th grade when I moved to Huntsville, Butch was already a leader in his own right - even at that young age. When we got our instruments in band, he amazed us all by playing 'Star Wars' on his tenor sax - over and over and over. In Jr. High, we were in Mrs. Woods English class together. She used to play cowboy tunes for us every morning. I can still hear Butch singing along with 'Drifting Along with the Tumbling Tumbleweed'. Butch always made us laugh. And now to find out what a fantastic man he was. A man in the real sense - brave, heroic, a joyful father and husband. I'm so honored to have known him. I'm so thankful to know of Butch's commitment to Christ; that he's in the arms of the Father. That is truly the greatest comfort - knowing that eternity is close at hand and that we will see Butch again. Our Father's arms are not shortened either. May you all rest in His love as He carries you through this sad loss.

Kaiti Davis MacMillan - February 06, 2006 at 09:38 AM

KA

“ Dear Sherry, God only knows the depth of pain you are feeling in your soul and I can't imagine that my words will alleviate any of that for you. But I know in my heart you'll come through this because you have wells of strength within you. Hannah and Nicholas will always know their father because you'll make sure Butch's legacy of love and courage lives on through them. God saw fit to bless you by giving you Butch and those children and you have been lucky to have had the kind of love that many will never know in their lifetime. Love like that never dies and will continue in your heart and memories and in your beautiful children. My love and prayers go out to you and your family during this tragedy. Love, Kirsten

Kirsten & Ashley - February 04, 2006 at 07:51 PM

MW

“ We can not begin to express our deepest sympathy to you. Please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers. God bless you all.
Most sincerely, Mac and Leanne Woodward

Mac and Leanne Woodward - February 04, 2006 at 12:16 PM

JB

“ Dear Tom and Patsy,

Iddy and I are so very sorry for your loss and send our condolences, thoughts, and prayers to you for Steven's passing.

We have enjoyed knowing you all over the years and hope you are in good health.

God bless you both and may you find comfort in Steven's memory.

Jack and Iddy

Jack & Iddy Barron - February 03, 2006 at 03:40 PM

DF

“ Sherry, Hanna, Nicholas and extended family - We are lifting your family up in our prayers daily asking for strength, comfort and guidance during this difficult time in your life. May the Lord's Blessings be with you and the family and know that He is only a prayer away. Romans 8:28 is a verse that has always helped me through the trials in my life, I hope it also gives you comfort.

Dennis, Karen, Nathan & Nikki Forbus - February 03, 2006 at 02:53 PM

GS

“ Dear Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, Sherry, Bryan and Ernest: My wonderful memories of Butch are far too many to jot down onto paper. Even as Father Time had put several years between our 'get togethers' we were always able to pick up right where we had left off the time before. I consider myself very lucky in that I was able to spend a little cyber time with Butch before he died. Just one week before his death I received an email from him detailing to me his excitement about all that he was involved in ... none of which he called his job! It seemed he truly loved his 'work' and all that it entailed. I should mention the beginning of his email was all about Sherry and their two children ~ I could honestly feel him smiling thru the words he had put on screen!! I will forever count my blessings for being given the opportunity to call Butch my friend! What a guy! I will miss him greatly. My thoughts and prayers are with you all! Speaking from experience, the heartache of losing someone so close never goes away...but, with time, the pain turns into all of the unforgettable laughs, jokes and loving memories!

Glyna Wooderson Stevenson - February 03, 2006 at 12:00 PM

OM

“ There are no words at a time like this. we pray God's continued love and grace for all of the Freeman family. You will be in our prayers as you go thru this difficult time.

Odis & Barbara McGilberry - February 03, 2006 at 11:58 AM



“ **Stephen Philip "Butch" Freeman**

February 03, 2006 at 10:02 AM

LE

“ I was so deeply saddened to hear of your loss. Although I haven't seen Butch in many years, I will always have fond memories. I don't think there was ever a time that he didn't make everyone around him laugh. High school wouldn't have been the same without him. His good spirit and love for life made him a very special person. Please know that your family is in my thoughts and prayers.

Laurie Anderson Ellington - February 03, 2006 at 08:55 AM

CW

“ Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, Our thoughts and prayers are with you in this difficult time. May God Bless you and your family and give you strength in the days to come. Cathy Hayman Warren

Cathy Warren - February 02, 2006 at 07:01 PM

EC

“ Our deepest sympathy is extended to your family.
Families are forever.

Earl & Sherry Carter - February 02, 2006 at 06:48 PM

AM

“ Dear Sherry and family,

I am so sorry for your loss...from everything I've heard and read, he was obviously a wonderful man.

Please know that I'm thinking about you and that I hope your happy memories of him will help carry you through the difficult days ahead.

Love,

Annette

Annette Maddox - February 02, 2006 at 06:23 PM

DL

“ To Sherry and Family and my extended family.
I am so sorry for your loss and my heart is just broken for you. Your
are all foremost in my thoughts and as we discussed last week in
my prayers. Love to you all. Debbie

Debbie Lowe - February 02, 2006 at 02:35 PM

CO

“ My deepest sympathies for your family, sorry to hear of your great
loss. I regret never having the honor to meet him in person.
Sincerely, Conner Allred

ConnerAllred - February 02, 2006 at 02:05 PM

LK

“ Dear Sherry and Family,

Please accept my deepest sympathies during this difficult time.
From what I understand, Butch Freeman was a wonderful father,
husband, friend, and sibling; know that he will always live on thru all
of you. I am so very sorry for your loss.

My prayers are with all of you,

Lisa Keel

Lisa Keel - February 02, 2006 at 12:41 PM

MM

“ You must know how much we appreciate Butch. He gave his life so he would not harm our friends and babies.
We grieve with you and will never forget him.
Maida Marksheffel

Maida Marksheffel - February 02, 2006 at 12:10 PM

LB

“ We wanted to extend our deepest sympathy to you and your family.
May God Bless all of you.

Laurie & William Bedwell - February 02, 2006 at 11:47 AM

JE

“ To the family of Major Butch Freeman. I am saddened by the loss of your loved one. He will be sorely missed. He gave his life that others might live. A true selfless person he was.
He will always be remembered as a hero and U.S. Marine defending the freedom of this nation.

"Semper Fidelis"

*Jon Eastman
Houston, Texas*

Jon Eastman - February 01, 2006 at 07:38 PM

BB

“ While we are unable to understand the pain and loss that you are enduring, please know that our love and heartfelt prayers are with you all during this time. Be assured that God's grace is sufficient in even the most tragic of circumstances. If we can assist you in anyway, please let us.

Brother Joe Barnes - February 01, 2006 at 07:23 PM

SR

“ Tom, Patsy, Sherry, Bryan, Ernest & Kim, Our hearts are filled with sadness and grief, and yet an overwhelming honor for the privilege of knowing Butch. His compassion for people and zest for life was evident to us even in the short amount of time that we were able to spend with him during his visits to Huntsville. Not only is he a product of our Lord and Savior, but of his family as well. May a special peace be with all of you for the rest of your days. We love you.

Steve, Leslie, Chris & Ryan - February 01, 2006 at 04:07 PM

CS

“ Mr. & Mrs. Freeman - Words could never express our sorrow for your loss. Take comfort in the fact that God promises that you will see your wonderful son again. Earth holds no sorrow that heaven can't heal.

Please know that our prayers are with you during this difficult time.

With love, Carl & Angela

Carl & Angela Sanders - February 01, 2006 at 03:33 PM

SG

*To the Freeman Family,
I just learned of this last night. I Googled my friend Steve Freeman Huntsville Texas. I had heard of his passing just a few months ago through a college buddy we both knew but I had no idea of the tragedy. I was his friend at Southwest Texas State University in 1985. Steve lived right across my Dorm Room. We used to race our cars in San Marcos. He was proud of his '85 Monte Carlo SS Super Sport. White, with Red interior. And I had my '84 Mustang GT 5.0 My Father Owned a Ford Dealership in Duval County Texas, where I'm From. We talked about cars and stuff. He was a Very Good friend to me. He always knocked on my door to go pass the time. He always listened to Led Zeppelin and we even saw Stephenwolf (his favorite band) at a nearby show. He was always a bit of a Daredevil, sort of like Evil Knievel, the way I remember him. He was a Very Brave Guy. I'll Miss my Friend. RIP Freeman, as we called him.*

Saul Garcia - July 17, 2023 at 12:25 PM

LS

“*Dear Tom and Patsy, I would like to express my deepest sympathy for the loss of your son. It is obvious that he was loved and admired by all. Sincerely, Lou Schickel, Little Rock,Arkansas*

Lou Schickel - February 01, 2006 at 02:23 PM

KK

“*Butch was always and will always be one of my favorite people! His crazy wit and sense of humor would always keep us laughing and often times in trouble during class!! This past Christmas as I was looking through old boxes in the attic I ran across many photos of Butch and my other friends from the HHS class of 85. I shared with my two girls who each of them were and of course explained that Butch had lived just down the road from me as a child and had always been the class clown and dare devil. He will be missed by many and remember by all! May God Bless each of you!*

Kay Grisham King - February 01, 2006 at 01:13 PM

JH

“ *To the Freeman family:
Your family has meant so much to ours over the years. Growing up with Butch leaves me with many good memories. One that I will always remember is at 9 years of age, he and I were baptized on the same morning at FBC. Based on that, I know that I will see him again. What we only hope for, he is realizing right now. We are praying for The Lord to give you strength and comfort. Butch was a great guy and it was my priviledge to call him a friend.*
Jim and Melissa Hodges

Jim Hodges - February 01, 2006 at 09:46 AM

CF

“ *Dear Aunt Patsy and Uncle Tom, I extend my deepest condolences to you and Butch's family. You are in my heart and prayers.*

Christopher J. Fisher, Houston, TX

Chris Fisher - February 01, 2006 at 09:11 AM

JT

“ *I was deeply saddened to hear of Butch's untimely death. I was very much hoping to see him at the class of 85 reunion. I can't remember a year in school growing up when Butch wasn't there. He was the class clown and always made us laugh. He used to draw big eyes on the palms of his hands and hold them up to his face and make them "blink" making jokes about my big eyes!! It doesn't suprise me that he became such a hero to our country and to his friends. I offer my prayers for you all in dealing with this enormous loss. May our Lord Jesus give you "beauty for ashes, strength for fear, gladness for mourning and peace for despair."*

God bless,

Jill Kelley Tennison, Charleston, SC

Jill Kelley Tennison - February 01, 2006 at 09:09 AM

SR

“ Dear Patsy & Tom,
Our thoughts and prayers are with you in this most difficult time.
Shirley & Emil Reichstadt
Dallas, TX.

Shirley & Emil Reichstadt - January 31, 2006 at 03:25 PM

PJ

“ Dear Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, Sherry, Ernest, Bryan and Bud: Words can not express the saddness I felt when I got the call Butch had passed away. Butch had a zest for life and could energize any room he walked into. He was a true hero in every sense of the word. I know you all are so proud of all Butch accomplished in his short life. He did what others dream of doing and made the most of any experience. Butch is now soaring with angels with his best wing-person, Gandy, at his side. My heart goes out to each of you and I will continue to keep you in my thoughts and prayers.

Paula Jordan-Pemberton - January 30, 2006 at 08:14 PM

JK

“ With deepest symphy in the tragic loss of your Son. May the Lord bless each and everyone of your family.

Julius (Sonny) Kahn

JULIUS R. KAHN - January 30, 2006 at 05:34 PM

JB

“ To the entire family of Butch Freeman, we send our most heartfelt condolences for your loss. It goes without saying, we know how you feel, and we suffer your pain with you. It is so unfair to have to lose someone so energetic, so young, so loving, and such a friend to many, but we are not in control. We do know that you are not alone in your pain nor your prayers, for many of your friends and loved ones are praying for you. With the love and help of our Almighty and all loving Father, you will heal a little every day. May God hold you close while you are going through these trials. He was loved and I feel sure he knew how much. May God bless you all.
Trinell and James Barrum

James & Trinell Barrum - January 28, 2006 at 07:40 PM

CF

“ It is impossible to understand "why" the ones we care the most for are taken from us prematurely, so searching for some logical answer seems pointless. All we can do is be thankful, very thankful, for the time we are given with these special souls, however brief. I am grateful, and honored, for the time I did spend with Butch. I remember reading somewhere that some birds are never meant to be caged. Their feathers, and their song, are simply too bright. That's how I will remember Butch. And I'm very proud to call him my friend. If there is a heaven, and I am certain there is, good luck confining Butch. My guess is that he will be found soaring high above it. Fly high, my friend, and forever. Your friend, Craig

Craig & Michele Barrum and Family - January 28, 2006 at 01:47 PM

NG

“ When transferring to Huntsville schools in the 3rd Grade, I was placed in the class with Butch. Of course, being the new kid in class, I felt out of place and didn't fit in but he made me feel welcome and was just really a sweet kid. Throughout school, he continued to be a very friendly and considerate person but my favorite memories are of those that include lots of laughter. If one was fortunate to have a class with him, you could bet you were going to have some fun as he always kept the class laughing. What a privilege and an honor it was to have known him. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family as well as Butch's wife and children.

Nancy Gray-Pretzer - January 28, 2006 at 09:02 AM

NJ

“ Please accept our condolences and our sympathy to you and all of your family. Our prayers are with you. Norma Dell and Jerry D. Jones of Lovelady.

Norma Dell & Jerry D. Jones - January 27, 2006 at 09:30 PM

MF

“ We send our condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the families and relatives of Stephen "Butch" Freeman. I knew Stephen and his brothers as a child and a teenager. From what I have heard and read, it sounds like Stephen was definitely an American Hero. Stephen "Butch" was a joy and a pleasure to know. He will be missed greatly.

Sincerely!

Merle Remeny and Family

Merle Remeny and Family - January 27, 2006 at 11:53 AM