

MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT PARRIS ISLAND, S.C.(Aug. 16, 2007) -- Two dedication ceremonies were held here Aug. 16 for Cpl. Jason Dunham, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. The ceremonies were the dedication of a crucible warrior's station, named Dunham's Defense, and the addition of Dunham's photo and citation on the Wall of Heroes at 2nd Recruit Training Battalion.

Dunham's parents, Dan and Deb Dunham, along with his younger sister, Katie Dunham, were present for the ceremonies. The Dunham family also visited MCAS Beaufort to tour the Cpl. Dunham Room at the Corporal's Course building.

At the dedication ceremony of Dunham's Defense, Col. Craig Timberlake the Weapons and Field Training Battalion commanding officer, spoke of Dunham's devotion to his junior Marines and the Corps.

"Corporal Dunham exemplified our core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment," Timberlake said. "He was a Marine's Marine. He was one of the guys. He was someone to look up to and someone to confide in. He lived, trained, ate and slept with the men he honored and respected. He was a courageous leader who had a good sense of humor and a calming demeanor that reassured his men under the most trying of conditions. We honor him for his selfless sacrifice in the defense of others."

This Crucible warrior's station was dedicated to Dunham because he personified these core values and his actions provide an example to all Marines present and future of the highest standards of personal character, selflessness, commitment and sacrifice, Timberlake explained.

"The Crucible is an evaluation of recruits' mental, moral and physical character in order to validate their transformation from recruit to Marine. The Crucible stations are designed to challenge and inspire recruits through examples of our shared legacy of heroic unit achievement and individual character," Timberlake said.

"Corporal Dunham not only gave his life for his country, for his family that he loved so much and was loved by, but perhaps more importantly he gave his life for his fellow Marines. That is why we are so proud to have his heroic example as part of our training legacy and to serve as an enduring inspiration to the future of our Corps," Timberlake concluded.

At Dunham's Defense, recruits will read Dunham's Medal of Honor citation, and then perform ground-fighting techniques taught throughout the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. These techniques will reflect those Dunham used to defend himself and his fellow Marines on the day which led to his nomination for the Medal of Honor.

Recruits from Platoon 3064, Kilo Company, 3rd RTBn., demonstrated the station.

After the demonstration, the Dunhams stepped up to say a few words.

"It is a double edged sword, we miss him, but we have a lot of pride in him," Deb said.

Through tears, Deb also spoke to the recruits about keeping their two families close to them. Their civilian family is just as important if not more important than their Marine Corps family. Deb also talked about how well they have been accepted into the Marine Corps family.

Dan further added that, the family receives at least one phone call a week from Marines asking if there is anything the Dunhams need done for them.

At the end of the ceremony, the family proceeded to the Parris Island Museum for a tour, and then continued their visit to 2nd RTBn.

At the Battalion Headquarters building, Dunham's photo and citation were added to the Wall of Heroes. The wall contains the photos and accompanying citations of five other Medal of Honor

recipients who were also recruits of 2nd RTBn.

Present at the ceremony were nine recruits from Golf Co., which Dunham also graduated from.

Maj. Trent Gibson, who served as the company commander for Kilo Co., 3rd Bn., 7th Marine Regiment, and Dunham's former company commander, spoke to the recruits about what it takes to be a good leader and the qualities Dunham possessed that made him a good Marine and leader of Marines.

"Humility is what made him a good Marine and a good leader," Gibson said. "He led by personal example.

Leaders must be selfless and know there is more in the world than just themselves. Leaders must also be a part of the team and set examples in every way they can," Gibson added.

Gibson strained to hold back tears as he began telling a story of the Jason Dunham he knew.

Dunham joined 3/7 in October 2003 and arrived with 37 other Marines. He was a machine gunner, but established himself quickly in the regular infantry company.

Gibson had decided to realign the company into four rifle platoons. He called together his platoon commanders and platoon sergeants to hold what he referred to as a 'draft' to find his 12 best Marines to be squad leaders.

Dunham was the fifth Marine chosen, not because he was a good machine gunner, but because he was a good Marine.

The battalion was scheduled to deploy in February 2004, and Dunham decided to extend his contract with the Marines so he could remain with the battalion throughout the deployment.

"He promised nine Marines he would bring them home alive," Gibson said. "He was going to ensure he kept his promise."

On April 14, Dunham led his squad on a reconnaissance mission.

He stayed up all night the day before to ensure the success of his squad.

Gibson remembered Dunham sitting at a plywood table long into the night, bare-chested, wearing boots and his utility trousers, going over his squads plans for the next day. Dunham's two fire team leaders, Lance Cpl. Bill Hampton and Lance Cpl. Joshua Carbajal, brought Dunham a midnight snack.

"When your subordinates begin taking care of you, you know you have arrived as a leader of Marines," Gibson said. "When they are taking care of you, it is because you are too busy taking care of them to take care of yourself. I knew that night that Cpl. Dunham had arrived as a leader."

He then thought to himself what he would do if he ever lost a Marine like Dunham, he found his answer the next day when Dunham gave his life for Pfc. Kelly Miller and Hampton. Gibson nominated Dunham for the Medal of Honor.

He concluded with stating that by Dunham giving his life for Miller and Hampton, he provided the opportunity for new lives. Now, Sgt. Hampton has a 3-month-old daughter and Cpl. Miller, recently ended his active service contract, and is engaged to be married.

After Gibson finished, several Marines were struggled to hold in their tears, whether they had personally known Dunham or not, and the Dunham family smiled with tear stained cheeks.

There ceremony concluded as Staff Sgt. Antonio Hairston, the 2nd RTBn. drill master, hung Dunham's photo on the wall.