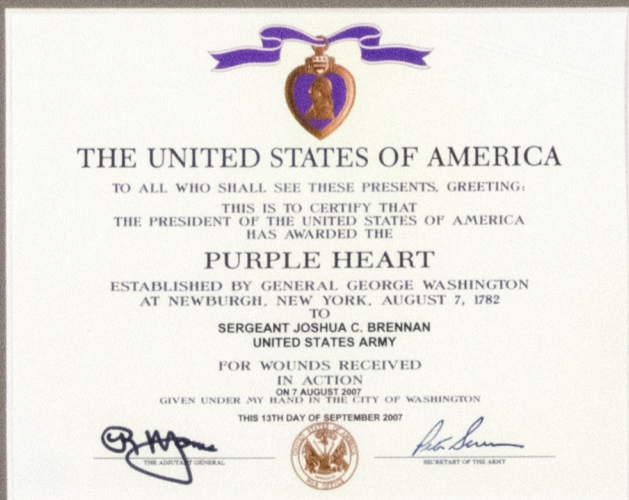




Sir,
 I wish that it were under better circumstances that I write this letter. But your son was such a fine man that I thought it necessary to take the time to tell you just how much he influenced those around him.
 From the fall of 2004 to the spring of 2006, it was my extreme honor and privilege to be a member of 1st PLT Kelts, Battle Co., 2-503d IN (ABN). As his platoon leader, I was able to work closely with your son day in and day out. I not only watched him grow as a man, but I was also able to observe the effect he had on all of his family of brothers in arms.
 When I came to the Kelts, in October 04 Josh was still a Private First Class and one of the two PLT Machine Gunners. Unlike most line platoons, our gunners weren't the biggest, strongest guys of the bunch, but rather those who were the best marksmen and could consistently perform under pressure. Josh must have always been a natural leader, though it wasn't obvious to me from the beginning, because he was more quiet and reserved than the rest of his squad. However, when he spoke, his peers listened, and they never failed to follow the example he would set.
 Of our numerous patrols in Afghanistan, the Platoon Sergeant and I would rotate the squads conducting daily patrols in order to provide sufficient rest to the men. However, weapons squad was not afforded that luxury because they carried the most firepower in the platoon. As a result, Josh was an intricate member of each combat patrol that left our safe house in Baylough. This alone is a testament to not only his personal strength, but his character. I can honestly say I had never once heard him complain (though it seemed the popular thing to do among his peers).
 Although I already held Josh in high regards, it wasn't long after he was promoted to Specialist that I came to respect him even more. At dawn on September 1, 2005, 2nd Squad and myself linked up after an all night movement with our then Company Commander, CPT Kloepper who was executing a separate patrol, which Josh was a part of. It was after link-up had been affected that CPT Kloepper informed me that our company Fire Support Officer, 1 LT Derek Hines, had been killed in a brief firefight with local Taliban. CPT Kloepper continued on to say that for the 45 minutes that it took for the MEDEVAC bird to arrive: Josh continued to perform CPR on Derek. Though he was gone, Josh refused to let go. I was left with the impression that as long as Josh felt he could make a difference, he would continue to give it his all. This is something that has been characteristic of your son for as long as I have known him.
 I wasn't the only one in the chain of command that thought the world of Josh. Your son was the only junior enlisted soldier in the platoon that had been recommended for the Bronze Star Medal and had it approved. I believe this is due to the insistence and support of CPT Kloepper and our then Battalion Commander, LTC Mark Stammer. Obviously, Josh stood out among his peers not only to me, but also to those who rarely had contact with him.
 For the year we were in Afghanistan once a day, in our little makeshift gym in Baylough, Josh and I would do PT together. We talked about home and our inspirations for the future. On more than one occasion, he had mentioned his then girlfriend Melissa and wondered what the future held for their relationship. However, he more often spoke of moving home after his time in the Army was done and working in Law Enforcement with his Dad. Josh was the kind of young man who always thought of family first, which was all the more flattering to the Kelts, since he absolutely considered each of us his brother.
 Although I left the Kelts at the end of the deployment, I was able to watch his continuing development from next door. I was extremely proud when Josh was promoted to Sergeant and moved to the position of Fire Team Leader. From this position his knowledge, experience, and heart undoubtedly helped mold new members of the Kelts into men.
 It has been said too many times before that the world is a lesser place for losing a certain soldier, and it is no less true in the case of Josh. I know I am not only a better soldier for knowing your son, but much more importantly, a better man. I will forever be honored to have known and served with your son not only as one of my soldiers, but also as a brother and true friend. My heart and prayers are with you.

Sincerely,
 CPT Mark E. Bush

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."
 John 15:13



SGT Joshua C. Brennan
 United States Army