

Gold Star Mom Attends Dedication to Her Son

Sheila McDaniel, 73, recently traveled to Okinawa, Japan to see a training center that was named after her fallen son, Air Force Master Sgt. William L. McDaniel II. Sheila's granddaughter Ashley McDaniel accompanied her.

On November 19, 2004, a ceremony and ribbon cutting was held for the McDaniel Center for Professional Development at Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa. The ceremony was attended by fellow airmen and base leadership as well as McDaniel's wife. Sheila and her husband Bill were unable to attend.

Sheila lost her husband Bill just three weeks after the Air Force held a highway dedication for her son, a six-mile section of County Highway 121 between Fort Jefferson and New Madison, in August 2017.

Sheila's granddaughter Ashley McDaniel, a paramedic, really pushed for her to take the trip and worked with the Air Force to make it happen.

"I pushed for the trip because I felt that she needed to see it and she needed to go and I always promised grandpa that I would make it happen. So when he died that was my mission," said Ashley. "The trip meant a lot to see her happy. They treated her like she was family and made me feel like I was part of that with her."

Both women made the trip to Japan in April, the Air Force paid for everything; their flights, housing, meals and sightseeing. The airmen at the squadron had several special things planned for them in addition to seeing the center. Sheila received a book of photos from the highway dedication from Commander Colonel Mike Martin along with a letter upon her arrival. They also took a video of the men in the squadron doing pushups in the hanger in honor of McDaniel, that Sheila said, made her feel proud.

"That was pretty awesome," she said.

In August 2017, they met two airmen that had known and worked with McDaniel, Retired Air Force SMSgt Brad Greisen and Master Sgt. Ronald O'Steen. "Brad and Ron were both on the helicopter with him, but they were dropped off in the jungle that day. So I know it's rough for them especially meeting me and our family," said Sheila.



Sheila McDaniel and her granddaughter Ashley McDaniel recently traveled to Okinawa, Japan to see a training center that was named after her fallen son Air Force Master Sgt. William "Bub" L. McDaniel II.

Sheila still remembers the moment she found out about her son's passing.

"When they first came to tell me, I felt like somebody had stuck me in the gut and just ripped half of me away," Sheila recalled. "As far as how I feel today ... I miss him very much – his smile, his sweetness, his kindness and beautiful face."

Being able to come to Okinawa, brought a sense of peace to his mother as well as the rest of the family.

Ashley McDaniel was 18 when her uncle, "Bub," died and is one of the key people behind getting her grandmother Sheila, here.

"I pushed for it, I pushed for her to be here because I felt like it would help her in a lot of ways," Ashley said. "To see how happy she is to be here, makes me happy – words don't describe it."