

BRAVO 369 Flight Foundation

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For Immediate Release

BRAVO 369 Flight Foundation and Heritage Flight Museum to Honor Fallen Soldier SSG Mark Wells on May 21 and Memorial Day

Special flag to be flown on Heritage Flight Museum's P-51 Mustang "Val-Halla" honoring Army SSG Mark Wells recently killed in Afghanistan.

Ferndale, WA - May 12, 2011 - Norse myth tells of a 'Great Hall' or 'Viking Heaven', called 'Val-Halla', where soldiers killed in combat are brought by the valkyries to live on with the god Odin, legendary heroes and kings, and others who have died in battle. For Army Staff Sergeant (SSG) Mark Wells, 'Val-Halla' was where he hoped to go.

Wells, 31, an explosive ordnance disposal technician, was killed in March by a bomb in Helmand province in Afghanistan. Wells served with the 303rd Ordnance Battalion, 45th Sustainment Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment Command at Schofield Barracks on Oahu from July 2008.

"He did make many comments about wanting to end up in Val-halla one day" said Mark's wife Danielle. "From the day I met him until the day he passed he wore the same Thors hammer around his neck, a gift from a friend in Iraq as a token of friendship and protection."

Jeff Geer, President and Chairman of the BRAVO 369 Flight Foundation, whose son-in-law served with SSG Wells on a tour in Iraq, decided to set about honoring SSG Wells' sacrifice. Geer, who volunteers at the Heritage Flight Museum, talked with executive director Greg Anders about the possibility of flying a US flag onboard the Museum's P-51 Mustang 'Val-Halla' in honor of SSG Wells. Himself a US Air Force combat veteran pilot, Anders immediately agreed. Geer also contacted Michael Anderson at Greenacres Memorial Park about securing a memorial flag and flag pole for the Festival of Flags event. Anderson agreed and further suggested that SSG Wells' flag be the one flown in on the Homeland Security helicopter for the flag-raising ceremony on the day of the event.

"SSG Wells, his wife Danielle, their children Finnegan and Caitlynn are very close to my daughter Heather (Geer) Newby and son in-law Army SGT Joshua Newby" Geer said. "Mark's death hit everyone in our family hard; it hit very close to home for us. We wanted to do something to honor Mark and the sacrifice he made for this country." SSG Wells and SGT Newby served together on a tour in Iraq. Danielle was 8 months pregnant with Caitlynn when Mark was killed.

On Saturday, May 21, at the Heritage Flight Museum's monthly fly day, SSG Mark Wells' flag will be flown by Anders in the P-51 Mustang 'Val-Halla', returning to the Museum's facility at Bellingham

Airport around 1pm. Members of Homeland Security will be present to accept Wells' flag for its final flight on the DHS helicopter to Greenacres-Moles' Festival of Flags event on Monday, May 30.

"Heritage Flight Museum strives to honor veterans and keep history alive," museum program director Kate Simmons said. "It's an honor for us to celebrate SSG Wells, his family, and their sacrifice, through this tradition of flying a flag. That our aircraft is named 'Val-Halla' after the Norse legend, and given SSG Wells' belief in that place, well, it makes it an even greater honor."

"Mark's tie to Whatcom County is through our family," said Geer. "We consider Mark, Danielle and the kids as part of our extended family. But foremost, Mark was a brave American soldier who fought and died for our country. His sacrifice and his family's sacrifice will never be forgotten."

Mark Wells was born and raised in San Jose, California. He enlisted in the Army in December 2003. Mark is survived by his wife Danielle, son Finnegan, daughter Caitlynn, parents Burl and Sharon Wells, sisters Angeline Jesse, Sheila Blue and Shannon McCarn.

On Memorial Day, May 30 the flag will be raised at the Festival of Flags ceremony at Greenacres Memorial Park to honor Mark and all veterans who have passed on and all soldiers who have died in combat.

For more about the Festival of Flags, visit <http://www.festivalofflags.org/>.

For more about the Heritage Flight Museum, visit <http://www.heritageflight.org/>.

For more information about the Bravo 369 Flight Foundation, visit <http://www.bravo369.org/>.

The BRAVO 369 Flight Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to Education, Aviation History and the Preservation of Historic Aircraft. Our main objective is to offer unique educational opportunities for students, teachers and the public to actively participate in a series of interactive flights and educational aviation projects and is a supporter of Heritage Flight Museum in Bellingham, WA and The Museum of Flight Washington Aerospace Scholars program.

Founded in 1996 by Apollo 8 astronaut Maj. General William Anders, the Heritage Flight Museum is a non-profit, 501(C)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and flying of historic military aircraft. The Museum settled at Bellingham International in 2001, and has been developing their displays and their community programs since then. Visitors are welcome to get an up-close look at the collection of memorabilia and artifacts, and a selection of flying World War II, Korean and Vietnam era including a P-51 Mustang, Douglas Skyraider, North American T-6, Boeing Stearman, L-13 Grasshopper, Link trainer and others.

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