

# MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

*Proudly Honors*



**CHARLES “CJ” SADELL**

**UNITED STATES ARMY**

**SERGEANT FIRST CLASS (E-7)**

**1995 – 2010**

**DIED FROM INJURIES SUFFERED**

**DURING COMBAT**

**ON OCTOBER 24, 2010**

*as*

**PURPLE HEART PATRIOT**

**MAY 2025**

*Kristin Sadell, Honoring Her Husband's Service and Sacrifice*

*Sponsored by: Howard County Chapter, NSDAR*



There I was, Kristin Sadell, at 31, a widow and two small children. Widows are supposed to be old, wear black, and mourn endlessly.

I met Sergeant 1<sup>st</sup> Class Charles “CJ” Sadell in Harrisburg, Missouri, in 1995 his senior year of high school. He did not have many options after graduation, so he joined the Army in 1999. His dad had served as a Marine. CJ had already served four years by the summer of '99. He had just reenlisted and changed his Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) to Intelligence from Airborne. We had mutual friends and we got reacquainted that summer. He finished his training in Fort Huachuca, Arizona. I married this handsome man on August 21, 1999, in Columbia, Missouri.

He had orders for Germany before we got married. We spent the first two months together and then he went to Europe. I did not arrive for six months....and I arrived six months pregnant. I found out two weeks after he left!

Communication was mostly phone calls, letters and cards, lots of phone calls. We never skyped!

CJ was deployed pretty quickly after arriving in Germany. He was deployed again in 2005. Oddly, right after each kid was born. This last time, though, felt very different. We had just settled into a new town and bought our first home in Missouri.

was over it! Our oldest son was starting fourth grade. The youngest was starting kindergarten. CJ had only five years left until retirement. I was keeping my eye on the prize, his retirement. He will finally be home with us. We had spent one-half of our married life apart.

We spent a week together in Fort Drum in New York before he deployed in April 2010. The boys, Cameron and Hunter, stayed with my parents in Fayette, Missouri. We talked about moving to Fort Drum, selling the house, etc., but, in the end, we put the boys in school in Fayette.

CJ was heading to do a three-day mission at the beginning of October. He let me know he would not have his phone. He would reach out when he could. After three days or so of not hearing from him, I was antsy but not really worried. I am a professional Army wife! I kept busy by bouncing from Fayette and Weston, Missouri.

CJ and his team were finishing up looking for land mines in this area. They were finished and were walking back. Suddenly, there was a blast behind him. The force of the bomb catapulted him through the air. CJ landed face down on the ground. He was still alive but both arms were broken. He had multiple burns on the backside of his body.



I was not at home. I was traveling with a friend on I-70 around Boonville, Missouri. I got THE call on my phone while driving that CJ had been seriously injured. They told me to pack a bag and grab my passport. CJ was being transferred to Landstuhl after they got him stabilized. I pulled off to the side of the road. I let my friend drive while I tried to get it together.

He ended up a day before his birthday at Bethesda, Maryland. His mother and I stayed two weeks there until he passed. CJ turned 34 in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). His right hand had to be taken. Because of the infection, they finally had to take his arm. He was getting worse. I would run to the chapel daily and beg God to heal him or take him.

Jeannie Jones Flannigan, I do not remember her title, but she was my lifeline. I think she was a wounded warrior advocate. They had a hilarious sign-up that caught my eye. I attended. She became my angel. She got me into therapy. I was lost, losing faith, and

scared. I wanted to get all this out. I began to journal.

My first lesson on grief this guy explained that my life was going to drastically change, no matter the outcome. My entire life as I knew it was over. My grieving had begun the moment I got the call. This year makes 15 years. I still feel displaced. Most of my trips are solo. I lost my match. I did fall in love again. We lasted a rough 7 years in a rollercoaster relationship. We were two very damaged hearts, looking to just add water to our family.

I do consider myself so very lucky. I got to see him, be with him and was able to say goodbye to him. His mother and I sat beside him. It was on a Sunday he passed. The doctors and nurses tried but sepsis was too much. His pain was awful. I remember that day the chiefs lost, and more helicopters kept bringing more injured young men to the hospital. CJ was 34 and one of the oldest ones there.

My husband said, "Burn me and throw me a party." We did the military funeral and took his urn downtown Weston and had a great carry-in supper provided by many wonderful people. The town stood between us and the Westboro Church people who came to protest.



I stood strong. I was a rock all the way until after the funeral. Those early quiet days after were awful. Then came the holidays, not cool. My friends and parents back in Fayette took care of the boys until the second semester. I could not take care of myself. My greatest source of support outside of my own family was the Farnan family from Weston. They were a local Goldstar family. Their son's picture is what drew us to Weston. We became fast friends. I love that family. A military guy was present for me for six months helping me with paperwork. I belong to Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The American Widow Project was a great source at the time for me. At the time I lost him, there still was not a lot for me support-wise. I did not know if it was ok for me to move on. I knew CJ would want me happy. This helped sometimes. I wish I would have asked for more help for all of us. I got lost in depression for over a decade.

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Here I was 31, a young widow and a mother of two young boys. We would go to his favorite places and eat his favorite foods. I tried to be a part of every single thing that honored him. But it was heavy. So, I sat down for a while with someone and we raised three boys together. I began again, celebrating our anniversary by going on trips or attending a concert he would love.

Our local chamber reached out about a banner in his honor like our friend's son. His banner now "hangs out" in downtown Weston all day. This is something he would have loved.

CJ got along well with his co-workers. He had a few close buddies, but they all lived here and there. He had the amazing ability to compartmentalize, and he did it well. We always lived off base and had friends in our new town. They adored him. Work stayed at work. Home was home. He kept those two separate.

He began every deployment reassuring me, "I'll be chained to a desk." We also went over what to do should he not return to me and the boys.

Now, I am coming out of a nap. I am enjoying what I can. I am taking pride in a home that he provided in a strong community. I miss him over and over each day, either cussing him or sending love and thanks.

CJ passed October 24, 2010, at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, after suffering wounds in an attack in Arif Kala, Afghanistan. He was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Dexheim, Germany; Fort Huachuca, Arizona; and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. His deployment included a four-month tour in Saudi Arabia in 1997, a six-month tour in Kosovo in 2001, a 12-month tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and finally in the spring of 2010, he was deployed to Afghanistan.

He received the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Superior Unit Award, and the Kosovo Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, as well as other medals for service in Iraq and professional development and combat action.