



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Lt. Michael P. Murphy '98



To the late Navy Lt. Michael P. Murphy for his bravery and valor in making the ultimate sacrifice for his country while trying to save others.

Navy Lt. Michael P. Murphy was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the United States' highest military commendation, for extraordinary bravery shown during Operation Redwing, a reconnaissance mission in Afghanistan in 2005. This is the first Medal of Honor awarded for combat in Afghanistan and only the fifth awarded for actions occurring after the Vietnam War. Murphy was only the fourth Navy SEAL to receive the medal.

In late June 2005, Murphy and three other SEALs were on an Afghan mountainside, deep in enemy territory, searching for a high-ranking jihadist leader when they came under fire. Realizing they were vastly outnumbered, Murphy climbed into the open—exposing himself to further enemy gunfire—to radio for help. Murphy was hit but returned fire while successfully transmitting a call for help for his fellow soldiers. Murphy ultimately succumbed to his wounds. Of the four SEALs on the

mission, only one would survive, and the tragedy was compounded when a rescue helicopter carrying eight SEALs and eight Army commandos was shot down, killing all onboard. Operation Redwing was the worst loss of life for the SEALs in the program's 43-year history. The lone survivor, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Marcus Luttrell, would later write a book about his experience. In it, he credits all three teammates for their heroism, including Murphy's sacrificial act that eventually led to his rescue.

Murphy's selfless actions that day did not surprise anyone who knew him. He grew up in Patchogue, on the eastern end of Long Island, N.Y., in an extended family of firefighters, lawyers, and police officers. He was surrounded by people who helped others, often with disregard for their own safety. Murphy demonstrated the same qualities early on, whether it was defending a bullied classmate in middle school or working as a lifeguard at Lake Ronkonkoma.

Although he was accepted to several law schools, Murphy was determined to be a Navy SEAL and accepted an appointment to the Navy's Officer Candidate School in September 2000. Becoming a SEAL,

the Navy's elite force whose name derives from its secret and highly dangerous missions on sea, air, and land, is itself an arduous process and notable accomplishment. Gaining entrance to the Navy's BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL) school requires a demonstration of physical and mental toughness few can sustain. Completing the school is even harder: more than three out of four quit before finishing. Becoming a SEAL also requires high scores on aptitude and intelligence tests and a month of jumps at the Army's parachute school. No one in Murphy's training class doubted he would make it. In July 2002, he officially became a SEAL. He was stationed at Pearl Harbor and deployed to Jordan, Qatar, and Djibouti in Eastern Africa. In 2005, his team was sent to Afghanistan, where Osama bin Laden was believed to be hiding. Murphy was killed in action on June 28.

President George W. Bush presented Murphy's parents, Daniel and Maureen, with the Medal of Honor at a White House ceremony on October 22, 2007. Murphy was inducted into the Hall of Heroes at the Pentagon—where his name joins 3,400 other service members

who have received the nation's highest honor—during a ceremony the next day. On May 7, 2008, Murphy was again honored when U.S. Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter announced that the newest guided-missile destroyer will be named the *USS Michael Murphy*.

Penn State honored Murphy, who graduated in 1998 with degrees in political science and psychology, before more than 110,000 people during the Penn State-Ohio State football game on October 27, 2007.

At the time of his death, Murphy was engaged to Heather Duggan '00. He is survived by his brother, John, and his parents. He was buried at Calverton National Cemetery in eastern Long Island, N.Y.

Daniel and Maureen Murphy accepted the award at a May 6, 2008 ROTC awards ceremony on campus.

