



Capt. John Hideo Houston, US Marines, Late Brother of Bill Houston

The Ohio State University Names Residence Hall in Honor of John Hideo Houston

By Bill Houston

Columbus, Ohio. On 4 November 2016, The Ohio State University dedicated their newest eight story co-ed residence hall in John Hideo Houston's memory. Houston was born in Tokyo, Japan, in 1949 but moved to the United States in 1965 with his family, including his younger brother, JAVA Founding Member, Bill Houston.

Houston House is one of several buildings honoring Ohio State veterans. Houston, a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps, died at age 34 after his helicopter crashed during training exercises in inclement weather in 1984 near Pohang, Korea.

After living in Washington, D.C., and Kansas City, Mo., the family had settled in San Diego when the federal government asked the elder Houston to come out of retirement and move to Columbus. After graduating from high school, he began his studies at OSU in 1969. During his sophomore year, he was diagnosed with stage 3 Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Bill Houston said the doctor's prognosis was grim, noting that the survival rate was less than 20 percent for that type of cancer. Houston said his brother wasn't going to let the disease affect

him, and the doctors at OSU began a very aggressive treatment, first removing the nodes throughout his body, followed by chemotherapy. Houston participated in an experimental treatment, and after nearly two years of surgeries and treatment, the doctors pronounced him cancer-free.

John's passion was his lifelong dream of becoming a Marine and of flying. His father fueled this passion by regaling the family with his exploits as a World War One fighter pilot. John began fulfilling his goal of flying by taking private pilot's lessons at Don Scott Field. He earned his private pilot's license and began pursuing advanced licenses.

In the summer of 1973, John Houston began a year studying abroad. He started this journey in Japan as part of an OSU exchange program with the Keio University. After his semester at Keio, he remained in Japan, retracing his roots and continuing his karate training. He then hitchhiked through Asia and Europe to complete an around-the-world journey.

Houston graduated from OSU in 1975 with a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Because he was ill during a large part of his time at Ohio State, he wasn't able to complete both sessions of a platoon leaders class, a commissioning program offered by the Marines, so he started his second session after graduation.

He completed the training with honors and received his commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. He then transferred to Pensacola, Fla., to begin flight training, and he was designated a Naval Aviator in May 1979.

Two years later, Houston earned a Humanitarian Medal by assisting the government of Sri Lanka in delivering television transmitters to a remote site. He helped provide the people of Sri Lanka full national coverage of their television station for the first time, delivering more than 15 tons of equipment to Mount Pidurutalagala.

In 1982, Houston served as a liaison officer working with the Japanese Air Self Defense Forces.

Upon completion of that mission, the producers of the movie, *The Killing Fields*, approached the Marine Corps about assisting in filming the evacuation of the American Embassy in Saigon. Because CH-53 helicopters were involved, the Marine Corps in 1983 sent Houston and his crew to fly the evacuation scenes.

After completing the scenes, his squadron, HMH 361, the Flying Tigers out of MCAS Santa Ana, was to take part in a historic flight of the first CH-53 squadron to be fully night-vision qualified.

On the morning of March 24, 1984, two flights of four CH-53 helicopters began their mission from Pohang, Korea, about 170 miles southeast of Seoul, Korea. The first flight crew completed the mission, but the second flight aborted its mission because of deteriorating conditions.

On the return to base, Houston's helicopter struck the mountainside 29 miles northwest of Pohang and all on board were killed instantly -- 18 U.S. Marines and 11 Republic of Korea Marines.

Today, a memorial in Pohang commemorates those who died.

Although he was born in Japan, Bill Houston said, his brother dearly loved America.

When John's brother was assigned to the Navy ROTC unit during a break in his flight training, Bill worked very closely with Dr. John T. Mount. Bill would drive Dr. Mount to the satellite campuses and during one such drive; Dr. Mount asked if Bill was related to John Houston. Bill had heard that question all his life and acknowledged that John was his brother. Thereupon, Dr. Mount recounted the story of how in an era marked by a change in the attitudes in America about patriotism brought about by the widespread disenchantment with the Vietnam War he found solace in some acts of passion and patriotism. Dr. Mount was confronted daily by the unrest. The campuses across America were the battleground of this change and Ohio State was no different. After the Kent State shooting, the Ohio State University closed the campus for about two weeks, and reopened on May 19, 1970. On May 21, 1970, a throng of protesters tore down the American flag from the flagpole in front of the Administration Building. Dr. Mount witnessed John's bravery as he and four other students wrestled the flag away from the rioters and kept it in safekeeping until help arrived. Dr. Mount found it ironic that five students, all of whom appeared to be of foreign descent, helped protect the American flag from Americans.

"Patriotism was not some cliché, and the lessons he learned at the Ohio State University stayed with him until the end," he said.

Bill said his brother would be honored by the recognition from OSU, but John would say he isn't deserving of such an honor. In addition to the building in the North Residential District being named in honor of Houston, photos and other memorabilia from his time as a student at OSU are displayed in the hall.

"He often spoke of Ohio State and the chances given him because of his time there," Bill said. "He lived what Woody Hayes preached quite often: 'You can never pay back, but you can always pay it forward.' John always paid it forward."