

THE CARGO COURIER

123rd Airlift Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard, Louisville, Ky.

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500 gather to remember Chief Tommy Downs

Wing command chief was 53 at time of death

By Maj. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

More than 500 friends, family members and coworkers gathered at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base Dec. 17 to remember a fallen comrade, 123rd Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. Thomas “Tommy” G. Downs Jr., who passed away Dec. 12 from complications of pancreatitis.

Chief Downs, 53, served as a full-time member of the Kentucky Air National Guard for almost 32 years.

Kentucky’s assistant adjutant general for Air, Brig. Gen. Mark Kraus, remembered Chief Downs as an outstanding leader with unsurpassed integrity who truly cared about those who served under him.

“Chief Downs was a giant of a man in every conceivable way to measure,” General Kraus said during his comments to the standing-room-only audience in the Base Fuel Cell Hangar.

“He was physically imposing yet disarming all at once. He was a large man who had

catcher’s-mitt sized hands with Ballpark Frank-like fingers that were not at all well suited for normal-sized pockets. Chief Downs may have been outwardly sized like Goliath, but his spirit, his heart and his endurance was much more like David. He was a teacher, a mentor, a trusted friend and companion.

“He loved his family and was totally and completely devoted to his wife, Janet — and she to him. He loved the Air National Guard, was completely dedicated to the mission and passionate about those who served it.”

General Kraus also praised Chief Downs’ “unrivaled personal work ethic,” which he said “motivated those around him to high achievement.”

“Chief Downs was the quintessential Command Chief. He had a presence about him that commanded the respect of others without ever demanding it. His integrity was beyond reproach, and he never made a decision that was self-motivated.

“He was a great respecter of persons, without regard to rank, position or station in life. His natural inclination was to serve others and lift them to greater heights. He applauded others’ success and bore their sorrow as life



Tech. Sgt. Dan Clare/KyANG

123rd Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. Tommy Downs, shown here during a 2007 change-of-command ceremony, was remembered as the epitome of “service before self.”

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ATSO training strengthens unit readiness, ORI preparation



Senior Airman Max Rechel/KyANG

Airman 1st Class Zach Heintzelman of the 126th Air Refueling Wing, Scott Air Force Base, Ill., demonstrates how to properly don a gas mask during ATSO training here Dec. 12.

By Maj. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

Members of the 123rd Airlift Wing spent the December drill becoming reacquainted with an old friend — their chemical warfare defense ensembles — during basewide Ability to Survive and Operate training.

The ATSO refresher was designed to help Airmen brush up on chemical decontamination procedures as the base prepares for an Operational Readiness Inspection scheduled for May, said Col. Greg Nelson, wing commander.

Another ATSO exercise is slated for February, and the wing will be conducting mobility exercises today and tomorrow in preparation for the inspection, which will test the unit’s ability to deploy to a remote location, survive enemy attacks, successfully perform its mission and return home.

This summer’s ORI is unique because it will be the first one ever based on a homeland-defense scenario. Typical ORIs feature simula-

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2010 marks the beginning of a new decade and an exciting year for the 123rd Airlift Wing

Happy New Year and welcome to 2010! Whether you pronounce it “two-thousand-and-ten” or “twenty-ten,” it is the beginning of a new decade. 2010 will be an exciting year for the 123rd Airlift Wing.

It will be very busy, and I hope both professionally and personally rewarding for all our members. In 2010, the 123rd will demonstrate how we will lead the way this decade.

I hope everyone had a great holiday season and enjoyed some well-deserved “R&R” with family and friends. We will need it: This month we will continue our preparation for our operational readiness inspection, or ORI. We will continue to concentrate our effort toward the first-ever homeland-security/homeland-defense ORI, while always being ready to respond to the needs of the Commonwealth, the United States and our allies abroad.

This month we will conduct our last stand-alone mobility exercise. We will exercise our readiness, mobilization and deployment of both personnel and equipment. It looks to be a cold weekend, so I ask you to dress warmly, protect yourself and your equipment, watch out for others, maintain a positive attitude and get the job done safely. This will lead to an outstanding deployment portion of our inspection, but we must be ready to deploy if called today.



**Col. Greg Nelson
123rd Airlift Wing Commander**

Next month we will conduct our last stand-alone Ability to Survive and Operate exercise, or ATSO. We will exercise numerous scenarios throughout the drill weekend, testing our ability to respond to emergencies, survive any enemy attack, and continue to perform all aspects of our wartime mission as trained and tasked. We must be ready to do our job in any environment today.

In March, we will exercise our readiness, mobilization, deployment, employment and re-deployment capabilities during our last flyaway operational readiness exercise, or ORE. We will put all our separate training together for our final practice before the inspection. We will identify any remaining deficiencies and correct them immediately.

This will be our opportunity to critique our performance toward perfection. Whenever we perform our mission, those we support deserve no less.

April will be our opportunity to put the final polish on our readiness — in both personnel and equipment. We will finalize our planning and preparation specifically for our ORI scenario.

This will be the month to read our Airmen’s Manual cover-to-cover, to finalize our operational plans and orders, and to ensure that we are individually ready to demonstrate why the 123rd Airlift Wing leads the way.

Finally, in May we will show the Air Mobility Command Inspection General why Kentucky is the best. Why the 123rd leads the way in the homeland-security/homeland-defense mission. Why the 123rd is always ready to support the Commonwealth, the United States or our allies abroad. The 123rd Stands Ready!

— Col. Greg Nelson

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Our office is located in room 1160 of the Wing Headquarters Building.

We welcome your feedback. Please contact the Public Affairs Office directly if you have suggestions for articles or photography. Publication deadline for submissions to the next issue is Jan. 19.

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Tricare to be available for 'gray-area' retirees

A new program will offer "gray area" reservists the opportunity to purchase Tricare health-care coverage.

While qualified members of the Selected Reserve may purchase premium-based coverage under Tricare Reserve Select, or TRS, retired National Guard and Reserve personnel did not have Tricare health coverage options until they reached age 60.

Under a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010, that has all changed.

The new provision allows certain members of the Retired Reserve who are not yet age 60, called "gray-area" retirees, to purchase Tricare Standard and Tricare Extra coverage. Tricare Extra simply means beneficiaries have lower out-of-pocket costs if they use a network provider.

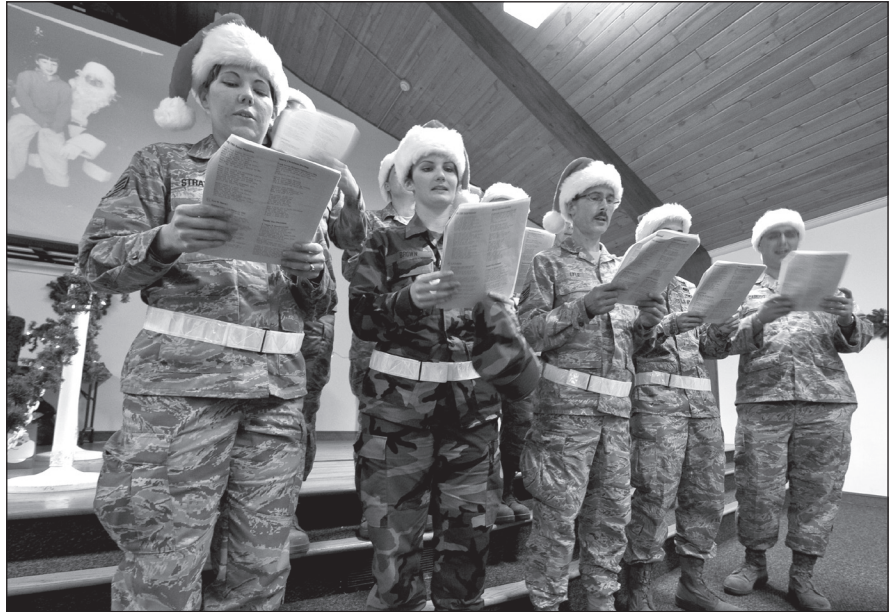
"We're working hard to coordinate all the details of eligibility, coverage and costs, and expedite implementation of this important program," said Rear Adm. Christine Hunter, deputy director of the Tricare Management Activity. "This is a major benefit program with implementation on the same magnitude as TRS. Qualified retired reservists should be able to purchase coverage by late summer or early fall of 2010."

While the health-care benefit provided for gray-area retirees will be similar to Tricare Reserve Select, the new program will differ from TRS in its qualifications, premiums, copayment rates and catastrophic cap requirements. The program is tentatively called Tricare Retired Reserve.

Premiums for the new gray-area retiree program will be announced after program rules are published in the Federal Register.

For more information, visit www.tricare.mil.

Happy Holidays



Maj Dale Greer/KyANG

A roving band of Kentucky Air Guard carolers stopped by the Family Support Group Christmas Party Dec. 13 to provide seasonal atmosphere for the event. Held in the Base Annex, the party included an appearance by Santa Claus, numerous games and gifts for children of 123rd Airlift Wing members.

Ex-123rd troop killed in Afghanistan

Governor orders flags to be flown at half-staff across Ky.

Cargo Courier Staff Report

Gov. Steve Beshear directed that flags at all state government buildings be lowered to half-staff Dec. 22 in honor of a Kentucky-native Airman and former member of the 123rd Airlift Wing who died overseas while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

According to the Department of Defense, Tech. Sgt. Anthony C. Campbell Jr., 35, of Florence, Ky., died Dec. 15 of wounds suffered from the detonation of an improvised explosive device in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

Sergeant Campbell was assigned to the 932nd Civil Engineer Squadron, Scott Air Force Base, Ill., at the time of his death.

He served with the Explosive Ordnance Disposal flight of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron from 2004 to 2007 before transferring to the

Air Force Reserve in early 2008.

Sergeant Campbell first entered the active-duty U.S. Air Force in 1992 immediately following graduation from Boone County High School and later transitioned to the U.S. Air Force Reserve before joining the Kentucky Air Guard in 2004.

Prior to his deployment to Afghanistan in October 2009, he served as a police officer with the Cincinnati, Ohio, Police Department.

He is survived by his parents, David and Francis Gonzales of Florence, and Anthony Campbell Sr. of El Paso, Texas; wife Emily, son Ryker, daughter Jordan and step-son Devin Ruberg, all of Florence; one brother, Nathan Gonzales of Florence; a sister, Mattia Craig of Florence; and grandmother Mildred Witt of Cincinnati. Sergeant Campbell was buried at Kentucky Veterans Cemetery North in Williamstown, Ky.



CAMPBELL

Downs

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found its way to our Airmen. He was a man who was comfortable in his own skin and made you comfortable in yours. He never tried to be something he wasn't, and he never needed to be more than what he was.

"When giant oaks fall they come down with a thunderous commotion, and their shadow is seen no more. The quiet strength I knew him for prevailed to the very end, but unlike the disappearing shadow of the fallen giant oak, the shadow cast by Chief Downs remains for us. It lives on in the lessons he taught us, in the laughs we shared, with the impact he made, in the lives he touched and in the stories we'll tell and retell.

"These are the things I know: Giants walk among us. I'm not one of them. But I knew one."

Col. Greg Nelson, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, echoed General Kraus' sentiments in his comments to the audience.

"We loved Tommy Downs because he was 'The One,'" Colonel Nelson said. "Throughout his whole career, he was the one who would do whatever it took to get the job done. Whether it was a job he could personally do himself, or whether it was job for which he needed all 1,200 Airmen in the 123rd Airlift Wing, the job was done — even if it fell nowhere within his position description or mission statement. He never said 'no' to anything."

"Our blessing is the 32 years that he gave to us. We loved him, and we will miss him."

Last month's ceremony, attended by military dignitaries from around the nation, featured a U.S. Air Force Honor Guard, scripture readings and a musical performance by one of Chief Downs' close friends, Senior Master Sgt. Cindy Seymour. Kentucky's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, also presented the flag of the Commonwealth of Kentucky to Chief Downs' wife, Janet Bogusz Downs.

Following the memorial service, Chief Downs was buried with full military honors at Evergreen Cemetery on Preston Highway. General Tonini presented the U.S. flag to Chief Downs' family at the graveside interment, which was punctuated by a three-volley rifle salute.

Chief Downs was Command Chief Master Sergeant of the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing from March 2, 2006 to Dec. 12, 2009. As wing command chief, Chief Downs advised the commander on all matters concerning the morale, well-being and readiness of the more than 1,200 enlisted members in the 123rd Airlift Wing. He also served as the wing's full-time Air Transportation Superintendent from



Above: Kentucky's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, presents the flag of the Commonwealth of Kentucky to Janet Bogusz Downs during a memorial service for her husband, 123rd Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. Tommy Downs, in the Base Fuel Cell Hangar Dec. 17. Chief Downs, a 31-year veteran of the Kentucky Air Guard, died Dec. 12 from complications of pancreatitis. More than 500 people attended the memorial service, including military officials from around the country. (U.S. Air Force photo by Maj. Dale Greer.)



Left: Chief Downs began his military career with the Kentucky Air National Guard in 1978. He was regarded as a national leader and subject-matter expert in the aerial port community.

February 28, 1989 to December 12, 2009. In this capacity, Chief Downs directed and managed all air transportation activities, including the planning, scheduling and processing of passengers and cargo for air movement.

He enlisted in the Kentucky Air National Guard on February 11, 1978, and initially served as a precision photo systems repair specialist for the wing's 165th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron. He later served as a maintenance technician for the squadron's Photographic Processing and Interpretation Facility, a portable reconnaissance-imagery clearing house.

When the wing's mission changed from aerial reconnaissance to tactical airlift in 1989, Chief Downs transferred to the new 123rd Aerial Port Squadron and took the lead

in the difficult task of cross-training scores of enlisted personnel for their new roles in cargo processing. He was regarded as a national leader in the aerial port community and was instrumental in the development of the Air National Guard's Aerial Port University.

During more than three decades of active-duty service in the Kentucky Air National Guard, Chief Downs deployed all over the world in support of numerous training exercises and contingency operations, including multiple deployments for Operation Noble Eagle, the U.S. military's homeland defense mission following 9/11.

Chief Downs was an in-resident graduate of the U.S. Air Force Non-Commissioned Officer

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tions in which units deploy to fight on foreign soil.

“This ORI is our chance to show the Air Mobility Command Inspection General why the 123rd Airlift Wing leads the way in the homeland security/homeland defense mission — and why we’re always ready to support the Commonwealth, the United States or our allies abroad any time they need us,” Colonel Nelson said.

About 400 Kentucky Airmen are expected to deploy for the ORI. They will be joined by another 400 Airmen from active-duty and Reserve units, Colonel Nelson said.



Above: Staff Sgt. Craig Davis of the 123rd Security Forces Squadron demonstrates how to clear an M-9 pistol of live ammunition during decontamination training held Dec. 12 in the Base Fuel Cell Hangar.



Photos by Senior Airman Max Rechel/KyANG

Members of the 123rd Airlift Wing receive refresher training on chemical decontamination procedures during the December drill (top right); an instructor demonstrates the proper way to remove contaminated outer garments (above); Airmen prepare to enter a decontamination station after exposure to simulated chemical agents (left).

'Hometown Heroes' program to continue in 2010

Air Guard campaign honors families, deploying Airmen

By Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — An Air National Guard award campaign that has honored thousands of Citizen-Airmen, families and civilians this year will continue into 2010, officials said here Dec. 15.

The Air Guard's Hometown Heroes Salute campaign recognizes Airmen who have deployed since 9/11 as well their families and personal "centers of influence" that supported them.

"It's to celebrate every single Airman that you have, and their family and the community that is taking care of you," Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Muncy, command chief of the Air National Guard, recently told the National

Guard's top leaders.

The success of the program was measured through the dozens of events that took place around the nation this year. During the recognition ceremonies, Airmen are awarded a cherry-wood encased letter of appreciation signed by the Air Guard's director and command chief, which includes a commemorative coin.

In addition, spouses or significant others receive an engraved pen-and-pencil set and medallion. Each child receives engraved dog tags.

"They have gone off very well," said Linda Brooks, the campaign's program manager at the Guard Bureau. "The average unit has about 500 people to recognize."

Thousands of Airmen will eventually be honored though the campaign for their deployments in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and Noble Eagle.

About 10 percent of the 135 eligible Air

Guard units held ceremonies this year, said Brooks.

"Everyone has done it with the pomp and circumstance that not only honors Airmen, but honors their families and the community," Ms. Brooks said. "They are proud of them for doing what they do."

Although the program was introduced last January, the first batch of awards only began arriving in the field in May.

The first ceremony was held by the Louisiana Air Guard, and many units are still awaiting their awards or are waiting for the best time to hold ceremonies, Ms. Brooks said.

A Web site, launched in April and accessed through the Air Force Portal, connects units to award ordering, eligibility criteria and other valuable information.

"Bottom line, this is the right thing to do," Chief Muncy said. "So take care of your Airmen, the greatest Airmen in the United States Air Force."

Recent promotions in the Kentucky Air National Guard

The following individuals have been promoted to the rank indicated as members of the Kentucky Air National Guard and reservists of the United States Air Force:

SENIOR AIRMAN (E-4)

Jeffrey Campbell,
123rd Special Tactics Sq.
Kyle Macallister,
123rd Security Forces Sq.

STAFF SERGEANT (E-5)

Barry Bolin,
123rd Security Forces Sq.
David Fouts,
123rd Medical Grp.

TECHNICAL SERGEANT (E-6)

Cindy Anderson-Hollins,
123rd Global Mobility Readiness Sq.
Cleopatra Buckner,
123rd Airlift Wing
Robert Fisher,
165th Airlift Sq.

Jeffery Firth,
123rd Airlift Wing
Jonathan Gray,
123rd Maintenance Sq.
Mark Grote,
123rd Global Mobility Readiness Sq.
Dominic Hollingsworth,
123rd Airlift Wing
Gregory Howard,
123rd Aircraft Maintenance Sq.
Shawn Ingle,
123rd Medical Grp.
Jason Likens,
123rd Global Mobility Readiness Sq.
Holly Moore,
123rd Airlift Wing
Jason Michel,
123rd Security Forces Sq.
Stephanie Murphy,
123rd Medical Grp.
Philip Seif,
123rd Global Mobility Sq.
Heather Speidel,
123rd Medical Grp.

MASTER SERGEANT (E-7)

Scott Bromm,
123rd Logistics Readiness Sq.

Meghann Coffey,
123rd Special Tactics Sq.
Michael Flickinger,
Joint Forces Headquarters-Kentucky
Thomas Hagan,
123rd Communications Flt.
Collin King,
123rd Airlift Wing
Andrea Mizell,
123rd Communications Flt.
Jon Mundell Jr.,
123rd Airlift Wing
James Nalley Jr.,
123rd Global Mobility Sq.
Aileen Tucker,
123rd Airlift Wing

SENIOR MASTER SERGEANT (E-8)

Brian Miller,
165th Airlift Sq.
Jason Vardeman,
123rd Maintenance Operations Flt.

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT (E-9)

Victor Dry,
123rd Communications Flt.

U.S. Forces-Iraq stands up in Baghdad

Air Force News Service

BAGHDAD — A New Year's Day ceremony here marked another evolution of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as several major command groups merged into a single headquarters command, U.S. Forces-Iraq.

"This ceremony marks another significant transition here in Iraq," said Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command. **"It represents another important milestone in the continued drawdown of American forces."**

More than 300 U.S. and Iraqi servicemembers and civilians attended the new unit's official activation ceremony at Al Faw Palace. Army Gen. Ray Odierno, Multinational Force-Iraq commander, said goodbye to his unit, while subordinate commanders, Army Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, Jr., commander of Multinational Corps-Iraq; Army Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero, commander of Multinational Security and Transition Command-Iraq; and Army Maj. Gen. David Quantcock, Task Force 134 commander, rendered their final honors and cased their colors, signifying the commands' official inactivations.

General Petraeus expressed his gratitude to the units' troops for the hard work they performed.

"You, our troopers, have been the single element in all that we have done in Iraq with our Iraqi brothers," he said. **"You have been the ones who have translated concepts and ideas from leaders like General Odierno and me into reality on the ground, under body armor and rucksack, in tough conditions, against an often barbaric enemy."**

General Odierno will command the new unit. He said that though some units were going away, the Iraqis could continue to expect the same high level of cooperation and support from U.S. forces.

C-27J training site opens

New aircraft to be based at Air Guard facilities

By Wayne Crenshaw
78th Air Base Wing

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — Air Force, Army and community officials celebrated the opening of a new cargo plane schoolhouse here Dec. 9.

The C-27J Joint Cargo Aircraft Schoolhouse will be used to train pilots of the C-27J, the new cargo plane used to reduce the need for ground convoys in dangerous areas.

After years of development by the Army, the C-27J Spartan program has shifted to the Air Force, but it will be a joint program and both Army and Air Force pilots and loadmasters will attend the school.

The school has already been in operation at Robins Air Force Base since Sept. 9, when the first of two C-27J planes arrived here, but the school will be under development through 2011. Still to be added are a operational flight trainer and a fuselage trainer. A mockup cockpit has already been installed.

"This aircraft will provide the capability to fly in Afghanistan where they do not have the infrastructure to handle our larger

aircraft," said Army Col. Anthony Potts, the project manager for aviation systems. **"It will have the capability to get supplies not within 50 miles of our forces but within the last tactical mile."**

The school had already been operating on a temporary basis in Waco, Texas, but transferred here Sept. 9 with the arrival of the first plane. That allowed the first graduating class of the school to be recognized at the ceremony.

The program calls for a minimum of 38 aircraft, but Army Maj. Gen. William T. Nesbitt, the adjutant general of Georgia, said at the ceremony that he believes that number will eventually rise to 78.

The aircraft will be stationed at Air National Guard bases.

He said after the ceremony that the aircraft will definitely save lives if the program's potential is fully realized.

"It will (save lives) if we field an adequate number of aircraft, but right now I don't think 38 is enough," he said.

Development of the school is a \$1.8 million project, which includes \$300,000 from the state of Georgia, \$125,000 from the city of Warner Robins and the Houston County Development Authority, and \$50,000 from the Macon-Bibb Development Authority.



Sue Sapp/USAF

A C-27J sits in the hangar during the C-27J Joint Cargo Aircraft Schoolhouse grand opening ceremony Dec. 9 at Robins Air Force Base, Ga.

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Hail to the Chief



Tech. Sgt. Dennis Flora/KyANG

Victor Dry of the 123rd Communications Flight is the Kentucky Air Guard's newest chief master sergeant after a pinning ceremony held in the Base Annex on Oct. 24. Chief Dry, the chief of cybersystems here, was joined by his wife, Shelli, for the event, which drew scores of family, friends and colleagues.

Downs

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Leadership School. He also completed both the NCO Academy and the U.S. Air Force Senior NCO Academy in non-resident status.

His awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal with two devices, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with one device, the Air Force Longevity Service Award with six devices, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with 10 devices, the Kentucky Distinguished Service Medal, the Kentucky Merit Ribbon and the State Active Duty Ribbon.

Chief Downs is survived by his wife, Janet, of LaGrange, Ky.; his children, Whitney Simpson (Bobbey), of LaGrange and Abigail Downs, of Louisville; his father, Thomas G. Downs Sr. (Lou), of Howardstown, Ky.; his sister, Laura Salerno (Kenneth), of Louisville; his grandchildren, Jared Simpson and Liam Simpson; and several aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.