

Winfield war hero honored by CBS News on Memorial Day

■ Nat'l TV crews return to city to honor Spann

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Memorial Day will never be the same for one Winfield family after losing their son in the nation's war on terror in Afghanistan last fall.

With Americans using the final Monday in May to honor the nation's fallen in battle, Winfield native Mike Spann was recognized in numerous ceremonies across the state for his sacrifice.

In addition to ceremonies in Auburn, Birmingham, and Florence in the days leading up to the holiday, the Spann family shared time with the governor on Memorial Day as part of yet another tribute.

Spann's death was part of a national television special in the closing minutes of the CBS Evening News, which aired at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 27.

Television crews from the network visited Winfield for the first time since the news of Spann's death broke last November.

CBS correspondent Mark



Shannon Spann, widow of CIA officer Johnny "Mike" Spann, and her three children (from left) Emily, 4, Alison, 10, and Jake, 11 months, visit her husband's grave at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., on Memorial Day, Monday, May 27, 2002.

Strassmann and producer local residents shown making Malinda Adams spent the day their daily rounds as cameras with the Spann family in rolled.

Winfield on May 23--just The center of attention four days before the special turned to Spann's boyhood aired on Memorial Day. home where his parents sat

Production crews filmed various scenes in the city's See **MEMORIAL** on page 7A.

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down with Strassmann for a question-and-answer session.

Family photos were shown during the special--several of which were during Spann's boyhood days while others were used to focus attention on his adult years--both as a civilian and as a U.S. Marine.



Spann

"It is bad that there is only one day set aside to honor those who have given their lives for this country. Every day should be Memorial Day in our hearts," Johnny Spann said near the beginning of the clip.

While the voices of his parents could be heard by the

television audience, scenes from Spann's interrogation of American Taliban John Walker Lindh were played.

Various news footage of the prison uprising near Mazer-e-Sharif was also on the screen as words from the Spanns continued to fill the airwaves.

"Our worst nightmares had come true," said Gail Spann in reference to her son's death in a foreign land. "We were trying to prepare the children for their mother's death when this happened."

Spann's first wife died with cancer only five weeks after the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer was killed.

Scenes from Spann's funeral at Arlington National Cemetery were revisited with the Spanns being seen slowly walking to their son's grave site--only a step behind the

flag. In the closing seconds of the tribute, Strassmann could be seen standing at the center of the Winfield Memorial Park.

He noted the city council's recent decision to re-name the park in Spann's honor, adding that an official ceremony to honor Spann was planned for late summer.

Recent news footage CIA director George Tenet was shown placing the 79 star on the agency's wall in honor in Spann's memoir was shown.

With the sounds of Tenet playing at Spann's funeral, six Marines were shown folding an American flag as the final minutes of the December ceremony drew a close.