

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

TAPS[®]

Comfort and Support Since 1994 MAGAZINE

FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



Comfort and Support Since 1994 **MAGAZINE**

TAPS Magazine is dedicated to the brave men and women who died while serving in the Armed Forces, and to their survivors. The quarterly magazine is written by surviving family members, friends, and care-giving professionals for those who are grieving the loss of their loved ones. We hope that you will find comfort, support, information, inspiration, and a sense of connection within these pages.

In accordance with our goal of compassionate care, TAPS Magazine seeks articles that reflect the theme: Remember the love, Celebrate the life, Share the journey. We accept articles of interest and depth that are hopeful in tone, yet truthful in emotional content. Your experiences or expertise can help us bring hope and healing to other hurting hearts. To submit an article to TAPS Magazine, please write to editor@taps.org.

TAPS IS HERE FOR YOU

If You Need to Talk, Call Us at
800.959.TAPS
or Visit Us at
WWW.TAPS.ORG

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ABOUT T★A★P★S

WHO WE ARE

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a national nonprofit 501 (c) 3 Veterans Service Organization providing compassionate care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, since 1994.

MISSION

TAPS provides ongoing emotional help, hope, and healing to all who are grieving the death of a loved one in military service to America, regardless of relationship to the deceased, geography, or circumstance of death. TAPS meets its mission by providing peer-based support, crisis care, casualty casework assistance, and grief and trauma resources.



SUPPORTS the bereaved survivor through a national network of trained volunteer Peer Mentors: those who have lost a loved one in the Armed Forces, and are now standing by to reach out and support others when a death occurs.

EDUCATES survivors, professionals, and members of the military about grief and the traumatic effects following the sudden death of a loved one. TAPS provides reading materials, the quarterly TAPS Magazine, training workshops, webinars, and an extensive website at www.taps.org with links to other helpful organizations.

SPONSORS regional Military Survivor Seminars & Good Grief Camps for Young Survivors in locations across America. These seminars give survivors the opportunity to learn, grow, share, and help each other heal.

OPERATES a national toll free help and information hotline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with support available from TAPS' Board of Advisors: leading experts in the field of grief and trauma. If you are hurting and need to talk to someone, call 800.959.TAPS (8277)

HOSTS the TAPS Online Community of survivors, providing secure chat rooms, a weekly message of encouragement, and general as well as relationship specific forums.

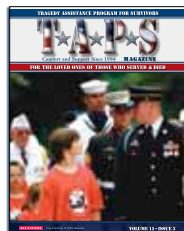


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Courtesy of *The Washington Times*

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Letters To TAPS



We want to know your thoughts, perspectives, and opinions on TAPS programs and publications. Write and tell us what you think, send us ideas for future topics, or submit your own article. Submission Guidelines can be found online at www.taps.org. Your TAPS family is waiting to hear from you! ★

I came back from our first TAPS weekend and felt like saying, "Thanks, I really needed that!" I needed the cry, I needed the friendship, and I needed to learn new ways of coping with grief.

**~ Jill Yesko Revitsky ~
Military survivor, Pittsburgh, PA**

I am an active-duty Marine, a dad, a husband, and someone who cares deeply for our fallen heroes! It puts my mind at ease to know there is an organization that will provide assistance to my family if I were to not make it home.

**~ 1stSgt Dustin R. Kazmar ~
USMC, Camp Lejeune, NC**

What a wonderful conference TAPS orchestrated Memorial Day weekend. I know the families were deeply touched and I am still hearing from people I met there. I very much appreciated being invited and having the opportunity to bring awareness to the Honor and Remember Flag. In regard to the TAPS magazine, I am always extremely impressed, each time I receive my copy, at the depth of information and professionalism.

**~ George A. Lutz ~
Surviving father of
Cpl George A. Lutz II, Chesapeake, VA
www.HonorandRemember.org**

I just wanted to write a thank you to TAPS in general and specifically for hosting the chats. They have really helped me a great deal: there is always someone there that will listen, add their thoughts, and just be there on those long nights. It helps me realize that even though I feel like I am the only one in the world that is going through this, I am not. The support I have received through the chats/emails is so much appreciated. I still cannot get to the point of actual oral conversations yet, but the typing away with the Kleenex in hand feels like a cleansing to me. Thanks again for everyone that is there for me!

**~ Kim Bernard Suggs ~
Surviving spouse of CW4 Milton Suggs,
Lockport, LA**

I thought the TAPS conference was wonderful: the speakers, the breakout sessions, and all that is available. The support and kindness of the staff and volunteers are unbelievable. There was so much warmth and love. I was so very impressed. To see people before the conference begins and then after is really remarkable. You can see in their eyes that they have connected and some of the pain is more bearable.

**~ Annette Iversen, PhD, ~
TAPS Supporter and Volunteer,
Orange, CA**



editor@taps.org





The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors is blessed to have friends who are generous in their support and untiring in their devotion. They come alongside us as partners in meeting the mission of comforting and supporting those who grieve. We are honored to call them Friends of TAPS, and are grateful for their assistance.



Thank you to our friends at BAE Systems!

JIM FRASER

As a military veteran, I understand well the sacrifices that you're asked to make. As a nation, we are eternally grateful to those who serve or have served their country, and the families who support them at every step along the way. ~ Jim Fraser

Jim Fraser is Director of Government Relations for the Electronics, Intelligence & Support operating group within BAE Systems in their Rosslyn, VA office. In this capacity, his responsibilities include working as a liaison with Members of Congress and their staffs on issues of importance to BAE Systems. Prior to joining the company, he was a Navy officer assigned to the Pentagon.

A 1979 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Jim was designated a Naval Aviator in March 1981, spending the majority of his active-duty naval career flying the P-3 Orion, specializing in anti-submarine warfare and surveillance. Leaving active duty in November 1986, he affiliated with the Naval Reserve in Willow Grove, PA. In April 1997, he was recalled to active duty in support of Operation Joint Guard in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Following this tour, Jim was offered a full recall to active duty, bringing him to the Pentagon. He retired in 2002

after serving more than 23 years of active and reserve duty in the Navy.

Jim's first introduction to TAPS was several years ago when he represented BAE Systems at the TAPS Honor Guard Luncheon. He was immediately impressed with the important mission of caring for the families whose loved ones have died while serving honorably in the Armed Forces. "My heart goes out to those who have lost someone special in their lives. At the same time, I am constantly inspired by their courage and determination," he said.

At the luncheon, the TAPS Marine Corps Marathon Run and Remember Team was mentioned briefly. Because of his running and coaching background, Jim approached Marie Campbell after the event and offered to help with the program in whatever way he could. In a running career spanning more than 34 years, Jim has completed nine marathons, including five Marine Corps Marathons, with a personal best time of 3 hours and 48 minutes. He has also coached hundreds of runners to successfully cross the finish line of a marathon, half marathon, or a shorter event.

For the past several years, Jim has provided coaching advice to the TAPS Run and Remember Teams preparing

for the Marine Corps Marathon and 10K, as well as the Army Ten-Miler. He has written a number of training articles for TAPS participants and also takes part in the monthly online chat sessions, where he answers questions about all aspects of endurance training. "I've been touched by the inspiring stories of remembrance. The Run and Remember program is so much more than just crossing a finish line of an event. It's a way to remember and a way to honor someone's memory."

Last year, Jim was the featured speaker at the TAPS Annual Saturday Night Pasta Dinner before race day. "I'm honored to be a part of the TAPS Run and Remember Team. By my desk, I have a framed picture of the 2008 team, a special gift from the team last season. It's a constant reminder of what is possible when a group of dedicated volunteers succeed in ways that they might have thought were once impossible and collectively achieve so much for this important organization. I truly believe that there is no more special gift we can give than one offering hope for the future while honoring the memories of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country." *

For more information about BAE Systems visit



www.baesystems.com





A Change of Season

Learning to Keep Our Loved Ones' Memories Alive in Every Season

By Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS

It's harvest time, clean up time, gathering time. It's time to put away the beach balls and the lawn mower. It's time to shake the sand from the shoes and store away the croquet set and find the storm windows. It's time to "put up" the garden's bounty and find someone who doesn't have enough zucchini. It's time to find the mittens and try on the sweaters and coats. It's time to gather nuts and firewood and to get out the soup pot and make stew. It's fall and it's a time of preparing and finishing and putting away and getting out.

Fall in our family always meant another cleaning spree as Mom swept the summer sand from the porch and got us organized for the winter. We had to sort through our comic books and sea shells and colored stones, putting them away to make room for the school books and fall leaves we would soon be bringing home. It was hard to let go of the shells that we found while racing across the beach. It was hard to put away the stones we found while wading in the mountain streams. It was hard to

put away summer, even if the coming fall meant new adventures and new friends and homework.

It was hard to change from summer to fall back then and it still is. I find myself not wanting to let go of the long, lazy days of summer. I am not ready for the shorter days and longer nights, for the cooler winds and the fall rains. I am not ready for sweaters and soup. I am not ready for another year to pass so quickly into memory.

Putting things away reminds me of the day I had to put your things away and this, like every other season, becomes the season of sad.

I was just getting used to summer's slower pace and easy ways. I liked making supper salads and eating cherries and watermelon. I liked looking for shooting stars at night and hearing the cricket's call. I liked the soft breezes and the sunlight dancing through the sprinklers.

Of course, it was hard to get used to summer, too. I liked spring and its freshness and its promises. I liked peeking tulips and budding trees. I liked the smell of newly turned earth as we prepared the garden and I liked the

lengthening days. I liked winter, too, just as I liked last fall. It's the change that I don't like!

It seems to take me longer each year to adjust to the new season. Maybe it's because I am older each season and I have to remember that. It was just summer the last time I looked out the window and now it's fall and soon it will be winter and then spring will catch me by surprise and pretty soon another year will have rushed by.

I've always been a "take charge" kind of person and now I seem to be in charge of nothing!

Why can't I seem to hold onto anything anymore? I've lost countless mittens, my waistline, memories, days, checkbooks, umbrellas, my mind, and you. I want to stop the clock and push back the seasons and just stand still! I want to hold you again and trace the outline of your face with my fingers, pushing back that lock of hair and memorizing your smile. I want to hug you again, tight, and feel your arms around me. I want to hear you singing in the backyard and see you running down the street, chasing the cat.

I want to sit down in the summer's grass and make daisy chains with you and spit watermelon seeds. I want to wander through the fall woods and jump in leaf piles and toast marshmallows and watch football. I want to throw snowballs and make angels in the snow and build a snow fort. I want hot chocolate and doughnuts and to share a quilt and a good story with you. I want to hunt for four leaf clovers with you and plant flowers and a vegetable garden.

Ah, a new season... a new way of looking at things and of remembering the joy we shared. Maybe that's the secret to each new season.

I want you back in my life... NOW and for all seasons. I don't want empty spaces at the table or quiet sounds in the house. I want you to share my todays and my tomorrows. I want YOU. I always did and still do. And it's this emptiness that makes the change of season so hard. There's no one to share the chores with now and no one to help the way you helped.

Putting things away reminds me of the day I had to put your things away and this, like every other season, becomes the season of sad. But the seasons keep coming and going and I am still here. I think I'm beginning to see a pattern to this journey. Once I'm "in" the new season, I'm okay. It's just the beginning that is so hard. So maybe if I could just jump right into

the middle of fall or winter or spring, maybe if I could just not have to begin again every time, I'd be okay.

So, I think I'll go put up the holiday lights now and dye a few eggs. I'll make soup and fruit salad and get out the scrapbooks and sit with my loved one who always knew me best. I've got your pictures out and I'm wearing one of your shirts. It feels good because it's a bit chilly in this fall air.

Ah, a new season... a new way of looking at things and of remembering the joy we shared. I don't want to miss that anymore, so I think I'll just start remembering you as you lived, not as you died. And maybe that's the secret to each new season. Take inventory of what you've got, clean house, and make room for what you want. Then jump right in and keep on dancing. You are the music in my soul and you are with me any time, all the time, no matter what the season. *

About the Author



Darcie Sims is a bereaved parent and child, long time friend and keynote speaker for TAPS, author, thanatologist, pastoral bereavement specialist, licensed psychotherapist, and president and co-founder of GRIEF, Inc. For more information visit: www.griefinc.com



Boxes in the Attic

Sorting, Keeping, Giving, and Storing our Loved Ones' Personal Effects

By Betsy Beard, surviving mom of SPC Bradley S. Beard

Many of us have been faced with multiple shipments of personal effects from various corners of the world. Others of us are denied any access to the items that might help us feel more connected to our loved ones. Wherever we find ourselves on the scale of ownership of personal effects, the pain is immeasurable and long-lasting.



I turned my head slightly as I drove, checking the traffic in the other lane. My attention caught on the brass button on his sleeve, seeming to wink at me as the sunlight fell on it. I would have given anything to have my soldier beside me in the car, actually wearing the uniform. But instead, his neatly pressed uniform was hanging on the clothing hook in the back seat. It was moving day, and my son's belongings were carefully packed in the trunk and on the back seat. The car was filled to overflowing with the things that were the most precious to Brad, the things that I couldn't entrust to a moving company.

My heart was also filled to overflowing... with sorrow. After three and a half years, I was surprised by how quickly the emotions of grief could flatten me when I touched and handled Brad's things. That reaction hasn't changed since the day we were notified of his death. On that day I wandered painfully through the house thinking, *He will never see this again, never wear that again, never enjoy those again, never... Never... NEVER.* The word still slices through my heart.

In the days after our notification we haunted Brad's room, ferreting out the memories, carrying items downstairs where family and friends congregated. His books, his toys, and his pictures occupied space in every room. We didn't know that months later those same mementoes would migrate back upstairs to be packed away from sight. It would soon hurt too much to look at them.

In the meantime we dreaded the day Brad's personal effects from Iraq would be delivered... after the Army had itemized, sanitized, cataloged, and re-packed them. How

would we bear to open the boxes? How could we bear not to open the boxes? Would any of his things be damaged? Would all of his belongings make it home? What on earth would we do with all these valued possessions that he couldn't take with him to heaven?

The personal effects arrived today. It was very painful to just see the footlockers all sealed up.

But I was able to find a spot in an area of the house that I do not have to go to daily, and I will just open them when I feel ready.

~ Kim Suggs

My husband and I have the most wonderful, loving, and beautiful daughter-in-law possible. Our son's lockers were delivered to her house the day after we were given his final briefing. I do not remember if we were able to open the lockers at that time, but our daughter-in-law waited for us to be with her. I consider her decision to include us a gift.

~ Jonnie Chandler

For weeks bits and pieces of Brad's life had been drifting back to us, each item pulling our attention back to the awful, inescapable reality that Brad was no longer present in our world. Individual items came to us by way of our Casualty Assistance Officer. He would call and tell us there was a package and set up a time to deliver it. The first jarring delivery was a set of Brad's dog tags. It was a horrible realization that they had been taken from his dead body and cleaned and shipped to us from Dover. There followed in rapid succession, and on different days, the contents of his wallet, his empty military ID case, and a packet of photos that the Army had developed.

And then we got the call. Brad's personal effects from the combat zone had arrived in North Carolina. Our Casualty Assistance Officer personally loaded them in his vehicle and drove to our house. There were five large boxes containing everything that Brad had thought was important enough to be included on his last deployment. Our CAO unloaded the boxes and carried them inside. And then he did a truly helpful and amazing thing. He offered to help us check the items against the inventory list to make sure everything had arrived. We could not have done this on our own, and we were grateful for his help, especially after he discovered the orders for an Army Achievement Medal that had not been documented in Brad's personnel file yet. In addition, we discovered that some of Brad's favorite things had been damaged. If we hadn't gone through the contents, we might not have known about the damage before the two-year replacement deadline.

By the time we moved everything to Brad's room, it was time to think about the household goods that were still in transit from Korea. Perhaps it was better that all the belongings didn't come at once. The piecemeal barrage allowed us to get used to the notion that Brad was not going to take care of his own things anymore. Even so, we were overwhelmed. When the ten boxes arrived from Korea, they remained in the loft untouched for many months. These

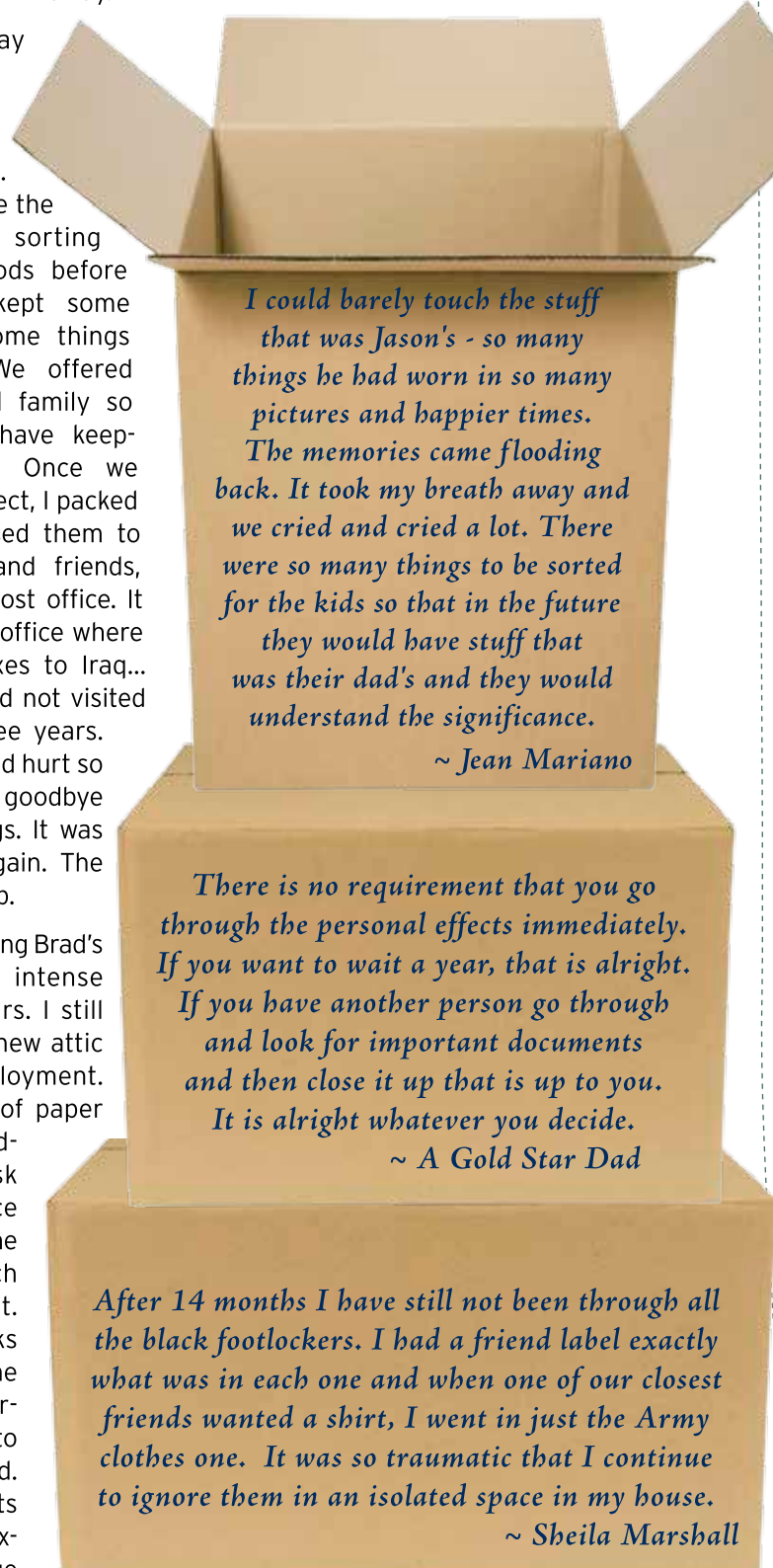
were the boxes Brad had packed himself, knowing he would be redeployed to a different base at the end of his combat tour of duty. We couldn't face the idea of assimilating his things into the household. But we dared not throw anything away, because it felt like we would be throwing him away.

Our family's day of reckoning came three years and three months after Brad died. We gathered to face the daunting task of sorting Brad's earthly goods before we moved. We kept some things. We put some things back in boxes. We offered items to extended family so that they would have keepsakes from Brad. Once we completed our project, I packed the boxes, addressed them to various relatives and friends, and drove to the post office. It was the same post office where I used to ship boxes to Iraq... the post office I had not visited for more than three years. I had no idea it would hurt so badly to say a final goodbye to Brad's belongings. It was hard to breathe again. The tears would not stop.

The pain of handling Brad's belongings is still intense after all these years. I still have boxes in the new attic awaiting final deployment. I still have scraps of paper with Brad's handwriting in my desk drawers. The piece of shark cartilage he found on the beach is still in a closet. We read the books he loved, watch the movies he purchased, and listen to the CDs he enjoyed. I still wear his shirts when I need an extra boost of courage

or confidence. I read his letters. I hug his flat, empty uniform. I am glad we didn't get rid of anything before we were ready. And I am glad we were able to share a part of his life with those who loved him.

continued on next page...



I could barely touch the stuff that was Jason's - so many things he had worn in so many pictures and happier times. The memories came flooding back. It took my breath away and we cried and cried a lot. There were so many things to be sorted for the kids so that in the future they would have stuff that was their dad's and they would understand the significance.

~ Jean Mariano

There is no requirement that you go through the personal effects immediately. If you want to wait a year, that is alright. If you have another person go through and look for important documents and then close it up that is up to you. It is alright whatever you decide.

~ A Gold Star Dad

After 14 months I have still not been through all the black footlockers. I had a friend label exactly what was in each one and when one of our closest friends wanted a shirt, I went in just the Army clothes one. It was so traumatic that I continue to ignore them in an isolated space in my house.

~ Sheila Marshall

Tips for Handling Personal Effects

... continued from *Boxes in the Attic*

For those of us who have received all the worldly goods of our loved ones, the task of sorting, storing, donating, and making decisions may seem monumental. We are afraid to part with anything. We are afraid to keep it all, lying unused in untouched boxes in the attic. Here are some suggestions for navigating this road:

Don't be in a hurry

Unless you are pressed for space, don't make any decisions in the immediate aftermath of the death. Although helpful friends may tell you that you must handle this task NOW, there is no pressing need to add to your stress at this moment. Once you part with an item, you can't retrieve it if it turns out that it was more meaningful and necessary than you had initially thought.

Use your own timetable

There is no right time to organize your beloved's belongings. Wait until you are ready to make the decisions. Since every relationship is different, there can be no "one size fits all" timetable for sorting a loved one's earthly treasures. At some point you will be strong enough to handle the flood of memories that come with touching these precious items. Our family's sorting day occurred because we were moving to a smaller house.

Ask for help if you want it

Some people need to do this task alone and in private. Others may feel unable to attempt it without outside help. You can ask a trusted friend to go through the boxes with you, and let them know it will be a difficult and upsetting process.

Realize that the sorting will bring fresh pain

When the three of us gathered to sort and choose some items that were meaningful or memorable to us, we could only handle it for an hour or two. We had to tackle the job in multiple sessions, one box or suitcase or drawer at a time, with space in between to cope with the awfulness.

Include immediate family, if possible

Consider including immediate family members in the initial sorting. If an item has a particular emotional connection for one person, allow them to "inherit" the object. If more than one person has ties to an item, consider "joint custody." In our family, we have a bracelet that travels between my daughter and me on specified dates.

Divide and conquer

We had four categories of items in our initial sorting: KEEP, THROW, GIVE AWAY, or RESERVE. Items that you keep can be displayed around the house, framed, stored in a special trunk, made into quilts, or saved for young children. If items are broken, torn, or otherwise

useless, you might be at a point that you can say goodbye to them once and for all. Having said that, expect some irrationality. I still have a piece of shark cartilage that I am not quite ready to part with. Consider offering the items in the GIVE AWAY boxes to extended family and friends before giving them to strangers (Salvation Army, Goodwill, or other nonprofit organizations). If you are unsure of your feelings about the disposition of certain articles, store them together in the RESERVE box and plan to revisit the question in the future.

Call on extended family and friends

If no one in the immediate family has a particular affinity for an item, it might be a good idea to broaden the invitation to extended family. Try to keep in mind that saving everything in boxes and footlockers until you die may prevent others from enjoying memories, finding meaning, or honoring your loved one. We called Brad's aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends to see if they would want something of his as a remembrance. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and we were relieved when almost all the items were adopted. *



Suicide Survivor Voice

By Kim Ruocco, MSW, LSW

TAPS Director of Suicide Education and Support

I thought my life was over when my husband, Marine Corps Major John Ruocco, took his own life. The thought of going on and raising my two young sons by myself was overwhelming. I could not imagine how I was going to get *myself* through it, let alone my boys. I felt alone, confused and isolated. I knew that no one would understand what I was feeling. I didn't know anyone that experienced this kind of loss. I felt ashamed and confused, angry and exhausted, too devastated to even look for help. On top of all the emotions, paperwork kept piling up, bills were going unpaid, people were asking me questions that I didn't have answers to, and the media was calling in hopes of being the first to tell our story. I would look at my boys, Joey (age 10) and Billy (age 8), and see their pain. But I couldn't take it away. I was at loss for words. I felt helpless.

I remember the night I found the pamphlet. I was sitting on my bedroom floor at 2:30 a.m. sorting through my mound of papers and crying. Tucked among the piles was a brochure that said TAPS on the front. Scribbled on the front was a note from a Colonel. It said, "If you need help you should call them, they will take care of you." I read the brochure carefully; I wondered, "Could this really include me?" My husband killed himself; I hadn't felt welcome in so many of the support systems for military survivors. I also didn't feel like I belonged in civilian suicide support. I missed my military family. I called the number on the brochure, and couldn't believe that someone answered in the middle of the night. She was so kind, and assured me that I was welcome. I felt that I had been thrown a life line.

I told my boys about TAPS the next morning. I couldn't wait to tell them about the Memorial Day conference, which included a kid's grief camp. They looked at me with their sad, frightened faces and said, "Do we have to go? We don't want to go to a place where everyone is crying all the time." I told them that we would go once and if they didn't like it we wouldn't have to go back. We flew to Washington D.C. that May. Joey and Billy were very hesitant, they talked about wanting to stay in the room and play video games. I encouraged them to take a chance. When we entered the hotel there were a couple of "greeters." A woman who knew my name approached me with a strong hug, and said to me, "I'm sorry for the reason that you are here, but I'm so glad you found us."

I looked over at my boys. Joe was sitting on the floor patting a beautiful Golden Retriever, and then I saw Billy. He was under the table sitting across from a young boy who was dressed in full Marine Corps Dress Blues. I heard Billy say to the boy, "My Dad died," and the little boy replied, "Mine, too." I knew we were in the right place.

The boys were assigned mentors, Military volunteers who would give one-on-one support to them. Billy's mentor had flown with his Dad in Iraq. He was able to tell Billy things about his Dad that I didn't even know. Joe's mentor had a love for life and a kind heart, just like his father. It has now been four years and both these men are still providing love, understanding, and the all-important connection to the military that my sons missed so much.

TAPS carried me through those first years by offering a multitude of support, not only with my complicated grief but with other issues, such as benefits. I am now using my strength, gathered over time, with the constant, loving care of TAPS, to help others. I will be forever grateful to TAPS for helping me redefine my life and continue on as a stronger person with a healthier family. ★

About the Author



Kim Ruocco earned her Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work from Boston University. She has worked in the field for twenty years and now joins TAPS Staff as the Director of Suicide Education and Support. It is her passion to educate others on what she has learned by looking back on her husband's life and death. She has talked to thousands of servicemembers in hopes of increasing protective factors and decreasing suicide risk among them.



Finding Our Stride

How the Marine Corps Marathon Became A Fundraiser for T*A*P*S

By Marie Campbell, TAPS Run & Remember Team Director



October 22, 2000, Lori and I completed the Marine Corps Marathon and raised nearly \$5,000 for TAPS.

On June 25, 1996, at three o'clock in the morning, my life changed forever when three Air Force officials knocked on my door to tell me that my husband and best friend, Dee "Soup" Campbell, was one of nineteen Airmen who did not survive a cowardly terrorist attack at the Khobar Towers Military Housing Complex in Saudi Arabia. I couldn't comprehend this, since I knew he would be coming home in two days. I didn't cry. It wasn't that I didn't want to, but something kept me from doing it. I was stoic and wanted to be the one who consoled everybody else.

Out of breath

Once I got past the shock, I immediately went numb and stayed that way for almost two years. I went through the motions of being a new young widow, but deep down I couldn't accept it. Dee had been on long deployments plenty of times. I just allowed myself to think this was another deployment. People offered their condolences, and also the usual remarks that a young widow commonly hears... "You're young. You'll get married again." and "He's in a better place," (which I totally believe is true, but I didn't want him to be there yet. I still wanted him with me.) I heard all these things, but I still couldn't cry.

As I approached the second anniversary of Dee's death, I received a brochure in the mail about the upcoming TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar in Washington, DC. I was headed to the garbage can to throw it away when I decided to stop and look at it. I had been desperately looking for others in my situation, especially those who had begun to heal. I wanted to see that there was hope for me. So I went to the seminar and found just that. It was the one place I did not feel like an outsider. I was also allowed to keep that military connection that I loved so much.

Getting my second wind

A month after the seminar I made some changes in my life. I moved to Texas, and went to graduate school. I knew this was a positive step, but at the same time I felt like I had hit rock bottom. I was finally experiencing my grief, and the flood gate of tears opened. Depression set in. I knew no one in Dallas at the time, and didn't have any support there. The TAPS chat on Tuesday nights became my source of support. I remember those new friends being so open, supportive, and loving towards me. I now had friends who "got it." My time for grieving and healing had finally arrived. I allowed myself to mourn, which in turn allowed me to begin to heal.

In the winter of 2000, nearly four years after Dee's death, I met Lori Hunter, another young military widow. We were traveling to a TAPS retreat and had known each other a little over an hour when we discovered that we had something in common: running! She shared her idea to form a team in the Marine Corps Marathon as a fundraiser for TAPS. I thought she was insane. Running was a hobby for me, not a commitment. However, I started thinking about how much TAPS had helped me in my journey towards healing since Dee had been killed. This would be an opportunity for me to give back to an organization that had truly made a difference in my life for the past few years. On that day, the TAPS Run and Remember Team was officially born!

Keeping my eyes on the goal

Training for my first Marine Corps Marathon was incredible. I actually set a goal - a word that I had dismissed from my vocabulary since Dee had been killed. I had a training schedule that I followed to a tee. Not only was I doing this for TAPS, but also in honor of Dee and his eighteen Air Force comrades killed in the Khobar Towers bombing. I was determined to complete this mission. Many times I felt not only Dee's presence during my training, but

the presence of his comrades. This made it even more special for me. I wasn't going to quit!

Crossing the finish line

On October 22, 2000, Lori and I completed the Marine Corps Marathon and raised nearly \$5,000 for TAPS. I felt a huge sense of accomplishment, and I couldn't wait to do it again the next year! In 2001, I was the only member of the TAPS Run and Remember Team, but the following year we grew to a team of eleven runners. That year we had our first TAPS Pasta Dinner the night prior to the race. Slowly, the TAPS team was making a name for itself. We grew to a team of thirty-five the next year, and sixty-five the following year.

We wanted to include more people in this meaningful event, but knew that not everyone could run a marathon. Since the Marine Corps Marathon included a 10K race and a one-mile Healthy Kids Fun Run, we incorporated those events into the TAPS Run and Remember Team. The TAPS team has continued to expand each year, now fielding more than 250 runners, including children.

On YOUR mark...

Everyone can be part of the TAPS Run and Remember Team! Our team includes TAPS survivors, military members, and just-plain-wonderful folks who want to reach out and help support TAPS. Team members are asked to run in memory of a fallen hero. If a runner doesn't know a fallen hero, TAPS connects him with a surviving family to run in honor of their fallen hero. It is truly meaningful for both the family and the runner.

You don't have to be an expert runner to be part of the team. We run, walk, or do a combination of both. My biggest supporter over the years has been my mother, Cecelia Railey. After a few

years of being my cheerleader, she decided to walk in the 10K in memory of Dee. I know she doesn't mind me saying this (she is awesome), but she is really slow. It doesn't matter, though. Our team isn't about being the best athletes. It's about coming together in celebration to honor the lives of our fallen heroes.



2008 Marine Corps Marathon

Get set...

Since our Run and Remember Team is spread out across the entire country, we offer support in various ways. After runners register, TAPS provides a website to post a photo of their fallen hero and keep track of their fundraising. We also provide support through emails and a monthly chat session. The chat session gives runners the opportunity to meet fellow teammates and receive training tips and advice from TAPS Coach, Jim Fraser.

One of our traditions is the TAPS Run and Remember Team member introductions. A few weeks prior to the race, an email is sent asking runners to introduce themselves, tell where they are from, and who they are running in memory of. Many connections have been made through these introductions, making the marathon even more meaningful and inspiring.

GO!

Once race weekend arrives, we truly do celebrate. We begin by supporting the kids during their Healthy Kids Fun Run on Saturday. We follow up that evening with our annual Saturday Evening Pasta Dinner, taking time to remember and celebrate the lives of our fallen heroes. Sunday is race day! We proudly wear our TAPS singlets, complete with photos of our fallen heroes. We cheer each other on the course, and have the most fantastic supporters, both at the finish line and at our TAPS Run and Remember Team tent! This doesn't mean we can't or won't shed a few tears during the weekend. At TAPS, we are always free to shed tears, but on this particular weekend we also have a lot of smiles!

Reaching our stride

I have often said that running and training for a marathon is a tough challenge, but losing the love of my life has been the toughest thing I have ever had to face. I believe I speak for all of my surviving teammates when I say that our participation in the marathon has been a healing process in our journey. By running the marathon for TAPS, we are not only paying tribute to our loved ones, but also raising funds to reach out and help others who will face the pain we have had to endure. I know our loved ones are proud of us!

You have an open invitation to join our team! Sign up as a participant, a volunteer, a sponsor, or a cheerleader. Everyone can be part of the TAPS Run and Remember Team. Registering for the TAPS Run and Remember Team is easy. Go to www.taps.org, and click on the link for our Run and Remember Team. For more information, email us at HonorCorps@taps.org. *

Thank you to *The Washington Times* for donating advertising space to the TAPS 2009 Run and Remember Team.



My Death Wish

By Michele Neff Hernandez

*The pain was so intense...
that at times I hoped it would kill me.*

It is an odd and frightening sensation to wish you were dead. After my husband died I fervently wished I could die, too. The first time I read that grieving people sometimes fantasize about death, I was relieved. My entire life I had appreciated the gift of life; to suddenly and frequently wish it away was a disconcerting and lonely experience. When my husband, Phil, was hit by a car, the initial shock provided a buffer to the complicated emotions that would gather to haunt me in the days and months to come.

As the buffer of shock wore off, I was struck daily by the realization that life would never be the same again. It felt like *Groundhog Day*—everyday I woke up with the expectation that the day would somehow go differently, and I would discover that Phil wasn't really gone. Day by day the reality of his death ate away at my desire to live.

There is a difference between wishing to be dead and being suicidal. My death wish did not come from a desire to stop living. It didn't even come from a desire to stop hurting—though the pain was so intense that at times I hoped it would kill me. My death wish came from a desire to be with Phil again. His physical absence was like a phantom pain in a limb that was no longer attached.



My death wish became a part of my daydreams. Jogging up a street, I would mentally challenge cars to run me over. On a plane, I would imagine a fiery crash that I didn't survive. Hiking in the mountains I looked for wild animals that might want to make a meal of me. Driving alone in the car, I visualized my car flying over any ledge I passed. Every brush with imagined death was followed by the disappointing result of still being alive; continuing to jog down the street, landing as expected at my destination, a safe return from hiking adventures, and no crash over the nearest ledge. My heart cried out in despair; my arms literally ached to hold him; and I joined the ranks of all who grieve in wishing daily that I could find a way to turn back the hands of time.

As time marched on, the call to live gradually grew stronger. In the early part of my grieving I desperately held on to two reasons to live; I didn't want to cause my family any added suffering, and my children needed me to be a mother to them during the darkest hours of our family life. My reasons for wanting to live were entirely about someone else; if it were up to me, I would have taken the fast track to Phil's side without hesitation... Beam me up, Lord!

There was not one personal reason that I could think of to continue living, but healing has a way of sneaking up on you. Eventually I recognized that conscious living is a choice. My husband lived his life fully, every moment. He had an awareness of the value of life that influenced his daily choices. Reflecting on how he lived his life reminded me of the gift that life is, and he became a role model for me.

As time marched on, the call to live gradually grew stronger... I have had to find reasons to live that are my own.

As I have begun the process of creating a life for myself in the aftermath of loss and grief, I have had to find reasons to live that are my own. I want to be a mother to my children. I want to make a difference in my community. I want to weave my husband's spirit into the fabric of the person I am becoming. I want to experience the adventure that life still holds for me. I want to use the lessons that death has taught me to impact the lives of others who grieve.

The woman my husband married died with him. Grief has changed me, but I am proud of the woman that is emerging from the ashes of loss. Life is

a gift to me in a way it never was before. The nuisances of life don't bother me as much as they once did. Age old adages like, "Take time to smell the roses," actually mean something to me now.

The world can't be the same place it was two years ago, because the people we have loved and lost aren't in—somehow that comforts me. What I am learning is that though many things around me are radically different, I can still be a whole, happy, grateful person. Ironically, my death wish has become a steely will to truly live. Phil would be glad to hear that. *

About the Author



Michele Hernandez is the founder and executive director of the Soaring Spirits Loss Foundation. SSLF is a nonprofit organization committed to providing resources and support to people grieving the loss of a loved one. The organization hosted its first ever National Conference on Widowhood in San Diego, CA, from July 17-19, 2009. Ms. Hernandez is a resident of Simi Valley, California where she lives and laughs with her three amazing children. You can reach Michele at micheleh@sslf.org. For more information visit SSLF's website: www.sslf.org



After-Death Communication Evidence That Life and Love are Eternal

By Bill Guggenheim & Judy Guggenheim
co-authors of *Hello From Heaven!* (Bantam Books, 1995)



Have you been contacted by a loved one who has died? After-death communication (ADC) experiences are not a new phenomenon. These spiritual experiences are extremely common, and in many other parts of the world they can be discussed openly and freely with relatives and friends.

Between 1988 and 1995, we interviewed 2,000 people who live in all fifty American states and the ten Canadian provinces. Ranging in age from children to the elderly, they represent diverse social, educational, economic, occupational, and religious backgrounds. We conservatively estimate that at least fifty million Americans have had one or more ADC experiences - and the actual numbers may be closer to double these figures!

We collected more than 3,300 first-hand accounts of ADCs from people who have been contacted by a deceased family member or friend. These are spontaneous and direct communications that may occur anytime and anywhere, but no third parties such as psychics, mediums, hypnotists, or devices of any kind are involved. Based on our research, the following are the twelve most frequent types of after-death communication people report having with their deceased loved ones:

Sensing a Presence: This is the most common form of contact. But many people discount these experiences, thinking, "Oh, I'm just imagining this." It's a distinct feeling that your loved one is nearby, even though he or she can't be seen or heard. Though most often felt during the days and weeks immediately after the death, you may sense his or her presence months and even years later.

Hearing a Voice: Some people state they hear an external voice, the same as when a living person is speaking to them. However, the majority of communications are by telepathy - you hear the voice of your relative or friend in your mind. When you have two-way communication, it is usually by telepathy. In fact, it's possible to have an entire conversation this way.

Feeling a Touch: You may feel your loved one touch you with his or her hand, or place an arm around your shoulders or back, for comfort and reassurance. You may feel a tap, a pat, a caress, a stroke, a kiss, or even a hug. These are all forms of affection, nurturing, and love.

Smelling a Fragrance: You may smell your relative's or friend's favorite cologne, after-shave lotion, or perfume. Other common aromas are: flowers, bath powders, tobacco products, favorite foods, and his or her personal scent.

Visual Experiences: There are a wide variety of visual experiences, which we have divided into two broad categories: partial visual and full visual ADCs. Appearances range from "a transparent mist" to "absolutely solid" with many gradations in between. You may see only the head and shoulders of your relative or friend, or someone you love may make a full appearance to you, and you will see the entire body as well, which will appear completely solid. Loved ones virtually always appear healed and whole regardless of their cause of death. Verbal communication may take place, but not always.

Visions: You may see an image of a deceased loved one in a "picture" that is either two-dimensional and flat

or three-dimensional like a hologram. It's like seeing a 35 mm slide or a movie suspended in the air. Visions are usually in radiant colors and may be seen externally with your eyes open or internally in your mind. Communication may occur, especially during meditation.

Twilight Experiences: These occur in the alpha state - as you're falling asleep, waking up, meditating, or praying. You may have any or all of the above types of experiences while you are in this state of consciousness.

ADC Experiences While Asleep: Sleep-state ADCs are much more vivid, intense, colorful, and real than dreams. They are very common. Both one-way and two-way communications are typical. You usually feel your loved one is with you in person - that you're having an actual visit together. These experiences are not jumbled, filled with symbols, or fragmented the way dreams are. Sleep-state ADCs are similar to those that occur when you are wide awake. Your relative or friend can come to you more easily, however, when you are relaxed, open, and receptive, such as while you are in the alpha state or asleep.

Out-Of-Body ADCs: These may occur while you are asleep or in a meditative state. They are dramatic experiences during which you leave your body and often visit your loved one at the place or level where he or she exists. These are extremely vivid, intense, and real - some say, "more real than physical life." The environments usually contain beautiful flowers and butterflies, colorful bushes and trees, radiant lighting, and other lovely aspects of nature - and are filled with happiness, love, and joy.

Telephone Calls: These ADCs may occur during sleep or when you are wide awake. You will hear a phone ringing, and if you answer it, your loved one will give you a short message. Two-way conversations are possible. His or her voice will usually be clear but may seem far away. If you are awake, you will probably not hear a disconnect sound or a dial tone when the call is completed.

Physical Phenomena: People who are bereaved often report receiving a wide variety of physical signs from their deceased relative or friend, such as lights or lamps blinking on and off; lights, radios, televisions, stereos, and mechanical objects being turned on; photographs, pictures, and various other items being turned over or moved; and a long list of "things that go bump in the night."

Symbolic ADCs: People frequently ask a Higher Power, the universe, or their deceased loved one for a sign that he or she still exists. Many receive such a sign, though it may take some time to arrive. Occasionally these signs are so subtle they may be missed, or they may be discounted as mere "coincidences." Common signs include: butterflies, rainbows, many species of birds and animals, flowers, and a variety of inanimate objects such as coins and pictures.

According to our research, the purpose of these visits and signs by those who have died is to offer comfort, reassurance, and hope to their parents, spouse, siblings, children, grandchildren, other family members, and friends. They want you to know they're still alive and that you'll be reunited with them when it's your time to leave this physical life on earth - and they'll be there to greet you when you make your transition. You may be asked to give a message from your loved one to somebody else. We urge you to write down the message verbatim and to deliver it, if possible, because it may help the recipient far more than you realize.

Nearly all ADCs are positive, joyful, and uplifting encounters that reduce grief, provide lasting comfort and hope, and accelerate emotional and spiritual healing. We encourage you to trust your own experiences and to accept them as being real for you. Unfortunately, some people react with fear when they have an ADC. This is usually because they are startled by the suddenness of the event, or they may have never heard of one happening to anybody else. Such people may assume they are "losing their minds and going crazy." And others find it difficult to reconcile after-death communications with their philosophical or religious beliefs.

Not all people are contacted by their deceased loved ones. We don't know for certain why some are and some aren't, but it seems that fear, anger, and prolonged heavy grief inhibit the possibility of having an ADC. Based on our research, we suggest the following: Ask for a sign that your relative or friend continues to exist. Pray for him or her and others who are affected by the death, including yourself. We recommend that you learn how to meditate, especially if you are currently bereaved or have unresolved grief. Meditation will enable you to relax and soften any fear or anger you may have. It will reduce your depression, improve your ability to eat and sleep, and facilitate your healing process. These deep relaxation exercises will also allow you to unfold your inner, intuitive senses. In fact, you may have an ADC experience while you are meditating.



Our research indicates that after-death communications are a natural and normal part of life. Therefore, we feel ADCs deserve the same public awareness and acceptance that near-death experiences (NDEs) have already received. For most people, an after-death communication from a deceased family member or friend is valued as a sacred and profound experience that will be cherished for a lifetime. ADC experiences usually expand one's understanding of life and offer a deeper awareness of life after death. They consistently communicate an essential spiritual message: "Life and love are eternal." *

About the Authors



Bill Guggenheim and Judy Guggenheim have been conducting intensive after-death communication (ADC) research since 1988. Bill serves on the Board of Advisors of the International Association for Near-Death Studies. He is a member of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC). Judy is also a member of ADEC. She and Bill have presented workshops and sharing sessions at many conferences and have been featured on radio and television.



TAPS Bereavement Resource Reports

By Jessica Duane, MA, NCC
TAPS Bereavement Resource Coordinator

When a family loses a loved one in the Armed Forces, its members can feel isolated and too exhausted to research local support options. TAPS is always there to provide care and support, but we also recognize that sometimes the hugs need to come from closer to home - from friends, neighbors, and members of your local community. To help you connect locally, TAPS offers a Bereavement Resource Report: a directory of grief resources and support groups in your local area. Here at TAPS, we strive to do everything we can to provide you with the best support possible and we are honored to help you connect with others in your community.

The goal of the Bereavement Resource Report is to provide a convenient, no-cost means to access free or reduced-cost bereavement services of high quality in local communities throughout the country. We work closely with partner programs, government agencies, national associations, and fraternal groups to provide a comprehensive directory of resources available in your home town location. From information you provide, we can create a customized listing of groups and resources for you to consider. You are free to review and research these options, and use them only if you choose to do so.

To create a Bereavement Resource Report, we gather as much information as possible specific to your circumstances. When you fill out a request for information, you will be asked a number of questions, including information on your location, your relationship to your loved one, and the circumstances of your loved one's death. By providing us with this information, you help us to find the best resources for your specific circumstances.

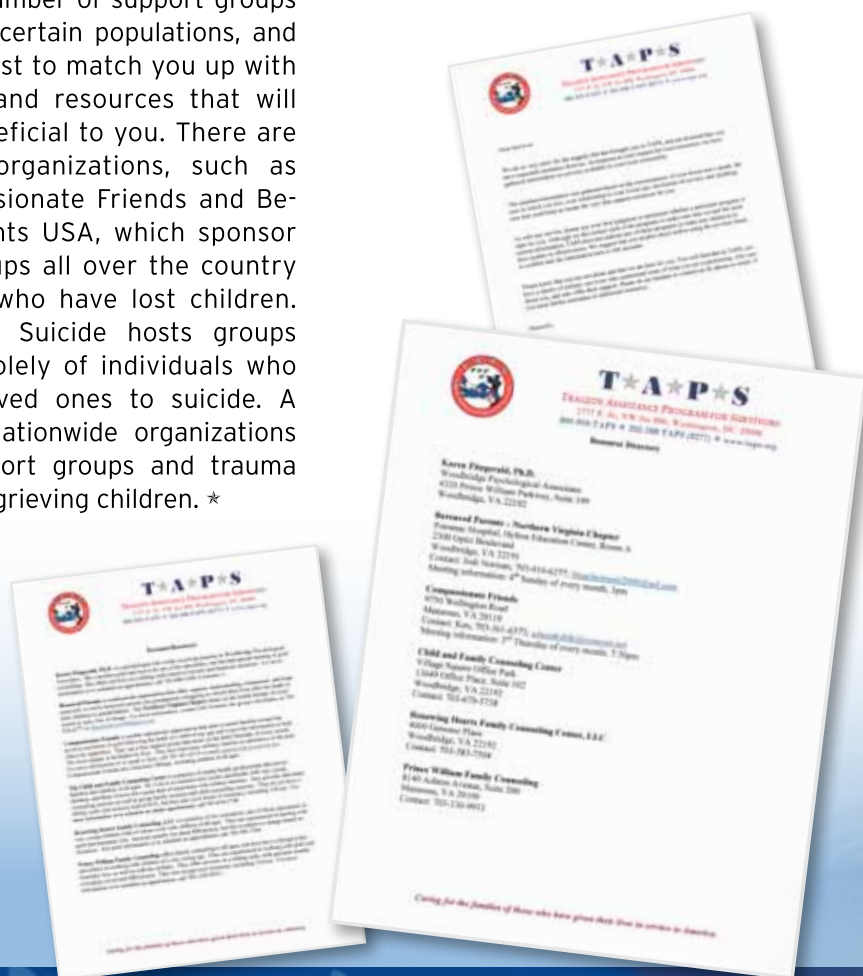
Once we have your request, we research local groups in your area and call them to verify that our information is current. We make sure that the group is still meeting, and we get as much information as we can about the population, focus, and goals of the group. All of this information is included in the description section of your Bereavement Resource Report. If the organization or group has any pertinent brochures or newsletters, these will be included in the report as well.

TAPS works closely with community based resources, networks of national organizations, partner veterans' organizations, and government agencies. We research bereavement coordinators at hospices, hospitals, and funeral homes, and grief support group organizers at churches in your area, as these often provide support groups for grieving families. A number of support groups specialize in certain populations, and we do our best to match you up with the groups and resources that will be most beneficial to you. There are nationwide organizations, such as The Compassionate Friends and Bereaved Parents USA, which sponsor support groups all over the country for parents who have lost children. Survivors of Suicide hosts groups comprised solely of individuals who have lost loved ones to suicide. A number of nationwide organizations provide support groups and trauma resources to grieving children. *

If you are looking for comfort close to home, check with us to see what resources are available in your community. Requesting a Bereavement Resource Report from TAPS is easy!

CHOOSE THE METHOD THAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU:

1. Visit **www.taps.org**, click on Resources to Comfort/Help, and then select Request Local Resource Information from the menu on the left-hand side. From there you can fill out your information and submit an online request.
2. Email us at **info@taps.org** and request a Bereavement Resource Report.
3. Call us at **800-959-TAPS (8277)** and we will take your request by phone.





This Flag Don't Fold

By Marilyn Tarvin

I'm treasured by my nation
And scoffed at by a few.
But I've never lost my meaning,
I'm the red, white, and blue.

I'm here to guard my country,
To stand for what is right.
And while I don't court trouble,
I won't run from a fight.

When called, I lead the battle
With extraordinary pride.
And when the struggle's toughest,
You know this flag don't hide.

This flag don't fold, or run or hide.
I keep the dreams of those who died.
So lift me high, my vision hold.
Oh see me fly, yes freedom's why
This flag don't fold.

I stand for every hero
Who doesn't make it home.
And I comfort every family
That must go on alone.

I cradle soldiers' coffins
And I'm cradled by their wives.
I'm proud to lend my glory
To those who gave their lives.

So keep the dreams of heroes
And liberty uphold.
With you to stand beside me
This flag will never fold.

This flag don't fold, or run or hide.
With colors bold, I'm freedom's child.
My stripes the blood of all who died,
Where patriots trod,
Almighty God,
This flag don't fold! *

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About the Author

Marilyn Tarvin retired from the Defense Intelligence Agency in 2004. She has been published in *Whatever Remembers Us: An Anthology of Alabama Poetry* and the *Limestone Dust Poetry Festival 2006, 2007, and 2009 Anthologies*. She resides in Toney, Alabama with her husband of forty years.



When the Bough Breaks

Forever After the Death of a Son or Daughter

By Judith R. Bernstein, Ph.D. ★ Reviewed by Colleen Betlach

I have always been an avid reader. I love books and literature for education and fantasy. Even as my bookshelves filled up, I obtained more. I loved the feel of being in a room full of books, and I was on my way to creating libraries in each room of our home. Whenever I had a problem, I read books. I have been dubbed the Self-Help Queen in my family, and I don't think that they mean it positively. It was only natural for me to turn to books when I needed them for something that I had never needed them for previously: comfort.

After my son Jesse (SN4- USN) died, I could not consume books fast enough. I could read several at a time, often re-reading them, and always getting extras to give as gifts to others. I appreciated good books because they were always there when I needed them, like a best friend. Whatever the hour or day, books are only an arm's reach away. It has been my experience that a good book enhances my life experiences, often picking up where a good therapist ends. On a rare occasion, a book especially ministered to me: providing hope when I felt hopeless, focus when I felt distracted, and reassurance when I needed to know that I was not crazy.

One such book is *When the Bough Breaks* by Judith R. Bernstein, Ph.D. The author and her husband, both psychologists, experienced the death of their son when he was seventeen years old. Though the book is not about military death and survival, it is about the journey that the bereaved walk, regardless of the cause of death of our dear ones.

What is the journey? Learning to live without our loved ones for the rest of

our lives... How we evolve and who we become as a result of having our lives turned inside out by the death of our children. Though the book is written from the parent's perspective, it holds true for other relationships in many areas of adjustment.

When the Bough Breaks is unique in that it is a study of what happens to people in the aftermath of the trauma of intense grief. Do they forget their children and if so at what year? Do they move on, get over, or accept the deaths? If so, how did they do so? To answer these questions, the author interviewed parents whose children had died in the time range from five years to thirty-seven years prior, with ten years being the average. Their stories are shared throughout the book.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is "The Way through Mourning" which discusses Grief, Factors that Shape Mourning, and the Nature of the Death. Part Two looks at "The Rest of Our Lives: Altered Perspectives," Mourning in Marriages, Family Relationships, Social Relationships, and Religion and Spirituality.

The author states the premise of the book in this way, "Our attitudes toward life change dramatically following a trauma. We don't get over a trauma; we adapt our way of thinking and feeling about the world as a consequence." It is the author's belief that the course of healing involves integrating that trauma, not overcoming it. People don't recover; they adapt. They alter their values, attitudes, perceptions, relationships and beliefs, with the result that they are substantially different from the people they once were.

The families that responded to the survey for the book expressed that they feel connected to other bereaved parents. When we are with other bereaved parents, we feel at home. We can talk about our children, show pictures, and speak freely. From the interviews of families in grief, the author confirmed what many of us live: that we're not crazy when we see a young man in public that looks like our child and we watch him, grateful for the moment. We learn that we will never get over that feeling, that we can live with those moments and still revel in the day.

I found this book particularly helpful because it was written not only by a bereaved parent, but by the multiple parents who had survived; who had made it through those first seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years. They discuss all the issues that I had and still face, eleven years after my son's death; issues known to mothers, fathers, wives, and husbands. Long after those closest to me had given up on my grief, and ultimately on me, the stories assured me that I was not crazy or alone. I was simply forever different.

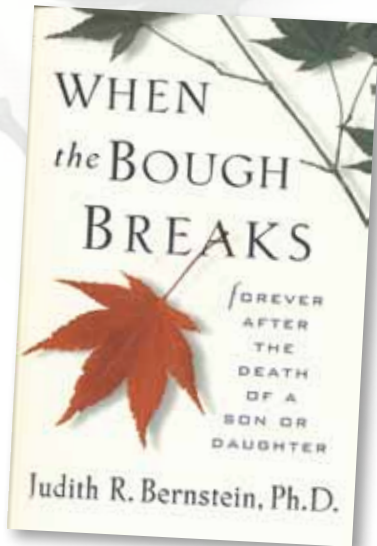
I felt that the book was so insightful and groundbreaking into the world of child death grief, that I assumed my family and friends would want to read it to understand me. I was wrong. It must be easier to avoid death than to face it, even avoiding the family and friends who cannot avoid it. Ironically, the people who tell me to move on and get over it also tell me that if it were their child who had died, they would not be able to get out of bed. I still don't understand why they expect something different of me...



Beyond Tears

Living after Losing a Child

By Ellen Mitchell ☆ Reviewed By Penny Young



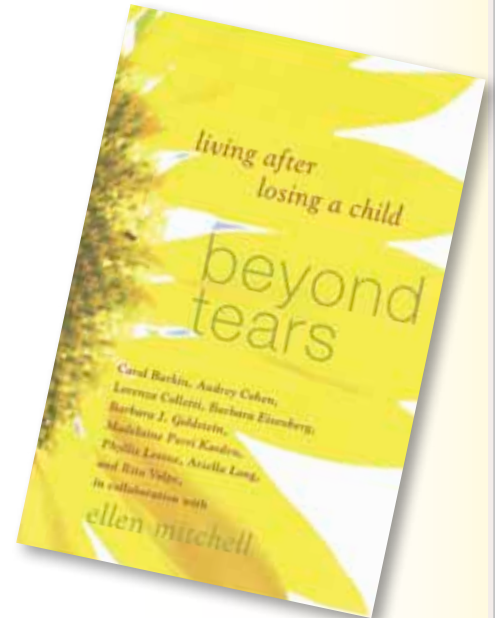
As our TAPS Peer Mentors have said, "Grief changes your address book," and mine was no exception. In time the names crossed out were replaced with new names; new family and friends. People that I could feel at home with; where I could speak Jesse's name, cry, laugh and wonder without rolling eyes telling me to move on, get over it, or get medication. And meanwhile, I still had my books.

As I move through my grief, I still read *When the Bough Breaks* at least once a year. I get something new and useful out of it each time; comfort, reassurance and hope. My hope is that you will, too. *

When we met we could barely speak, paralyzed and frozen we sat. We leaned on one another and were able to stand. And slowly we learned to walk. Together we have found new ways to live and love and remember life. ~ Rita Volpe

This book is about nine mothers who lost children who were teens or young adults. After more than seven years, they put into words their experiences. Their husbands also contributed a chapter. I find I return to this book again and again, especially when I question whether I should still feel so much pain. These mothers are able to capture in words the agony, shock, and desperation of the first year, and the many ways they have coped with the longing and loss in the years that follow.

It helped me to hear that each mother would process the events of their child's death over and over and over. Some (although not all) after many years were



able to think of their child's life instead of their death. These women speak the very words of my own heart, words that I dared not speak aloud myself. The pain is always there; it changes; it ebbs and flows, but "our children are as much a part of us as they were when we carried them through nine months of pregnancy." *

Book Reviewers Wanted!



Do you like to read?

Share your opinion about books related to grief and bereavement.

In each quarterly issue of TAPS Magazine, we like to feature book reviews written by TAPS survivors or caregivers. If you have read a book that is helpful, and would recommend it to other survivors, please consider writing a book review.

Book reviews can cover books about general grief issues, or be limited to the perspective of a specific relationship (spouse, sibling, parent, child, fiancée, friend) or manner of death (illness, accident, suicide, homicide). Include with your review the title, author, and publishing information, as well as your thoughts and comments, or a favorite quote. Our Submission Guidelines can be found online at www.taps.org. Click on "Resources to Comfort" and select TAPS Magazine. The Article Submission

Policy link is in the box on the right. Book reviews should be 600 words or less and can be sent to editor@taps.org.

From time to time, we also receive review books from publishers. If you are interested in reviewing one of these books for us, contact editor@taps.org for a list of available books.

* All reviews are the opinions of the reviewers and do not constitute an endorsement on the part of TAPS.



Guidelines for Helping Children Who Have Experienced the Death of a Loved One

◆ A Decalogue for the Concerned Parent ◆

By Rabbi Earl Grollman, DHL, DD

From *Talking About Death: A Dialogue between Parent and Child* (Beacon Press, 1990)



One of the most difficult problems for parents is helping a child through the crisis of death. Youngsters' feelings are too often overlooked - an understandable response in our still death-denying, death-defying culture. Most parents today are convinced that they should be honest in discussing the biological processes of birth, but when it comes to life's end they may fall strangely silent.

Of the many ways of dealing with death, the one most surely doomed to failure is the attempt to ignore it. Approach the discussion gently and lovingly; the tone of your voice should be warm, sympathetic, kind. What is said is significant, but how you say it will have a greater bearing on whether

youngsters develop morbid fears or will be able to accept, within their capacity, the reality of death.

Here are some guidelines for helping your child.

I Do take the word "death" off the taboo list. Allow it to become a concept that can be discussed openly in the home, the school, the church, and the synagogue. The question is not whether children should receive death education but whether the education they are receiving is helpful and reliable. Understanding is a life-long process that continues from childhood through old age. Death education begins when life begins.

II Do understand that mourning and sadness are appropriate for people of all ages. Children are people. Grief now walks by their side. Numbness, denial, anger, panic, and physical illness are variations on their theme of pain. These are the normal, slow, winding avenues of sorrow and loss.

III Do allow them to release their emotions. Let them call their feelings by the rightful names: "I am angry. I am sad. I am hurt." If they wish, they can scream it out. Or put their thoughts into words in the form of poetry or a story. Or a song. Even a painting. It is not the expression of these legitimate emotions that is harmful but their suppression. Sorrow, like the river, must be given vent, lest it erode its banks.

IV Do contact your children's school and inform them of the loss in the family; otherwise teachers might not understand any change in your youngster's grades or sudden sullenness or regressive behavior. When sensitive teachers share a problem with a child, they both establish a bond and help to relieve a burden.

V Do seek help if you feel unable to deal with your children during this crisis. There are times when even the best-informed and well-intentioned adult is simply inadequate. Seeking further counsel from a clergyperson, child-guidance clinic, or therapist is not an admission of weakness but a demonstration of love and support. Sorrow leaves an imprint on the healthiest of personalities.

VI Do not tell a child that he or she is now the man or woman of the house or replacement for a dead sibling. Never say, "You remind me so much of..." Do not treat your child as a substitute adult or surrogate relative, or as a friend... companion... confidante. It is difficult enough for youngsters to lose a loved one. Do not deprive them of their childhood.

VII Do not use stories and fairy tales as an explanation for the mystery of death. Never cover up with a fiction or a confusing interpretation that you will someday repudiate. For example, to say "Your father has gone away on a long journey" is to give the impression that he may someday return. If you say "God took your young mother because the Lord needs good people" you risk creating more confusion: good people do die young, but so do "bad" people. Children develop a deep resentment against a God who has capriciously robbed them of a mother whom they needed. Unhealthy explanations create fear, doubt, and guilt, and encourage flights of fancy that are far more bizarre than reality. A child's greatest need is for trust and truth.

VIII Do not let your children believe that you have all the final answers. Leave room for their doubts, questioning, and differences of opinion. Adults demonstrate their maturity when they say, "Are you surprised that I don't know everything about death? Don't be. That's why we must talk together. Let's help each other." Respect their individuality, for in the long run they must find their own answers to the problems of life and death.

IX Do not be afraid to express your own emotions of grief. If you repress your feelings, your children will be more likely to hold their own emotions at bay. Children receive permission to mourn from adults. A child can stand tears but not treachery; sorrow, but not deceit. To be able to show grief openly and to mourn without fear or embarrassment can help both children and parents to accept the naturalness and pain of death.



X Do not forget to continue to give assurance of love and support. The greatest gift that parents can give a child is themselves. Your caring and concern over the next months and years will be of inestimable value in aiding recovery. Be willing to listen for minutes, hours, days. Youngsters need to talk, not just be talked to. Many children have an almost insatiable need to pour out their feelings.

Try to recall the wonderfully happy times shared together, not just the sad moment of death. Youngsters should be reminded that the loss of one important relationship does not necessarily mean the loss of others, including the one with you. When words fail, touch! Attitude can be more important than words. Physical demonstrations of love and support are the greatest gifts to a grieving child.

As you walk the long and difficult path of separation you can find with your children new dimensions in their capacity for love, caring, and understanding. In truth, for people of all ages... healing is a process, recovery is a choice. *

About the Author



Dr. Earl A. Grollman, a pioneer in the field of crisis intervention, was rabbi of the Beth El Temple Center in Belmont, Massachusetts for thirty-six years. He retired to devote himself to writing and lecturing. A certified Death Educator and Counselor, he was cited as "Hero of The Heartland" for his work with the families and volunteers of the Oklahoma City Bombing. Dr. Grollman is the author of 27 books, including *Talking about Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child* as well as *Straight Talk about Death to Teenagers*.



Help to Make It Through the Night



By Marta Felber, MEd



Sleep disruptions are common in the early months of grief, whether the trouble is sleeping too much or not getting enough sleep. The insomnia of grief is difficult to battle, and the nights can seem endless when you have difficulty sleeping. We've all experienced at some point the short-term results of sleep deprivation: irritability, lack of coordination, slower reaction times, difficulty in concentrating, indecision, confusion, and fatigue. But over time, the lack of sleep can make itself felt in more serious ways: weight gain, higher blood pressure, memory loss, cardiovascular problems, and depression. If you are experiencing ongoing difficulties with sleep, make an appointment to see your physician and develop a plan for getting better sleep. In the meantime, here are some pointers from the personal experiences of author and counselor, Marta Felber, following her husband's death.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I can pretend during the daytime that Joe is away, working outside or in his workshop. Alone for the evening meal and crawling into an empty bed confirm the worst! The loneliness for him descends like a shroud and there is no escape. What do I do to get to sleep easier? And what about those long hours in the middle of the night when I wake and can't get back to sleep?

Ideas for Getting to Sleep and Surviving the Long Nights:

★ **Stick to a Regular Schedule.** Have a regular dinner date with my favorite evening TV program. Have a set time to go to bed, a radio alarm tuned to

music to wake me at the same time every morning. Get up, regardless of how little sleep I have had. Maybe take an early afternoon nap, not longer than 30 minutes; set the timer.

★ **Get Regular Exercise Everyday,** but not within 3 hours of going to bed. Exercise relieves stress and may help me relax and fall asleep.

★ **Avoid Caffeine and Alcohol.** Caffeine is a stimulant that can interfere with sleep patterns. In addition to regular coffee, there are measurable amounts of caffeine in chocolate, some soft drinks, and non-herbal tea. Alcohol also disturbs sleep patterns.

★ **Eat Light at the Evening Meal.** Have a carbohydrate snack about an hour before bedtime. Also try a glass of warm milk.

★ **Avoid Sleeping Pills** (except in the early weeks). It is too easy to become dependent and too difficult to get off them.

★ **Get Sunlight in the Afternoon.** It helps my body's natural clock let me sleep at night.

★ **Create a Sleep-Producing Atmosphere.** Low lighting, soothing music, a tepid bath, deep breathing, visualization of a beautiful setting, relaxation of body muscles or inspirational reading. Develop a nightly ritual of the things that work for me.

★ **Beside My Bed,** for those long wakeful hours, put dull reading material, a journal to record my feelings, note cards, a note pad for "to do" lists, a manicure set and a radio for late night talk shows and music.

If all else fails, go to the kitchen and make hot chocolate, adding marshmallows. Sip slowly, listen to the night sounds, look for the moon, the stars. Remember that nighttime is a good time for crying, and crying is healing.

I only need to get through one night at a time. I can do this. When I wake during the night, I will determine if I need to cry, get busy, prepare food, or just feel God's presence and a place of peace. Morning will come. *

About the Author



Marta's brother George was killed in the Battle of the Bulge when she was a teenager. After graduating from High Point University in North Carolina, a social work job took her to Pennsylvania where she earned her Master's in Educational Counseling at Lehigh University. Her career included positions in the states and consulting work overseas. The author of three books, Marta has drawn from her counseling background for self-healing after the death of her husband.

For more information visit:
www.LifeWords.com



Peer Mentor Profile

The heart of TAPS is the Peer Mentor Support network— survivors who have been trained and are willing to offer support to other survivors who are more recently bereaved. At TAPS we strive to match survivors with Peer Mentors whose losses are similar, although ultimately wounded hearts find solace with each other, even when circumstances differ. TAPS is grateful to its Peer Mentors— those special people who are able to reach through their own pain to help others cope with theirs.



Debbie Dey



It was Father's Day, June 18, 2000. The people of Willow Grove, PA were enjoying the air show until one of the planes went down just behind the base. It was amazing, in a town overflowing with people, that no one on the ground was harmed in any way. LT William Dey, the Navy F-14 pilot of the downed aircraft, was not as fortunate, leaving behind his wife of five years, Debbie, and a daughter, Kamryn, fifteen months old.

At the time, Debbie was working in the field of counseling, having completed her master's degree in clinical social work. Nevertheless, she struggled with accepting that she was suddenly a part of this "club"... the one no one wants to even know about, let alone join. A turning point for Debbie came when she found the friendship of another newly bereaved military widow. "For me this was the first person who truly 'got it.' I could tell her everything: the good, the bad, the ugly, my real fears, moments of desperation, and also those times when a smile reappeared. Through this friendship, I came to realize that despite my brokenness, underneath it all I was still me and I had more to give and more to do."



Debbie and Kamryn Dey

*Thank You
Debbie!*

It wasn't until Kamryn was a little older and started asking questions that Debbie made the decision to attend the National Military Survivor Seminar in DC. "We have attended ever since. Kam has always done the camp and loved every minute of it. My role has varied from participant to facilitator to support staff," explains Debbie.

For Debbie, meeting women who were further along in the grief process and seeing that they were happy again was profoundly significant. "Seeing them talking freely, confident, content with their lives, living, traveling, working, surrounded by family and friends, sharing good times... It was hopeful for me."

As a Peer Mentor, the hardest thing for Debbie was realizing that she didn't always have to say the right thing, and accepting that sometimes not saying anything is exactly the right thing to do. Simply being there for others and sharing their pain is key.

Bill will always be a hero to Debbie. Much of what she does in life is a way of carrying on his legacy: his kind, adventuresome spirit. When asked for a direct message for survivors, Debbie responded, "I am better able to see the blessings behind the tears now. I am grateful for the 'little while,' even if it was far too short. I cannot put into words how I have made it nine years... but I have. And you will, too. People will tell you that, you will tell yourself that a thousand times, and somehow you will make it. Believe. Trust. Hope. Pray. Love... and laughter will follow." *



T★A★P★S Good Grief Camp-Out! Fort Campbell, July 17-19



By Tina Barrett, EdD, LCPC



It was really amazing. It wasn't all sadness and grief. It was fun and exciting. It was an awesome experience. The best part was the fellowship with everyone around the camp fire and the cabin time where we talked about our lost loved one. I was glad to know that I wasn't alone. Everyone shared stories and it showed I wasn't alone. ~ TAPS Good Grief Camp-Out participant

This summer, the first ever TAPS Good Grief Camp-Out offered a fun, supportive, and healing program for children grieving the death of a family member who served in the military. The TAPS Camp-Out blended traditional overnight camp activities with opportunities to honor and remember.

A team of mentors from Fort Campbell joined TAPS Care Team members to staff the program. As a grief camp director, I have had the opportunity to work alongside many fantastic staff teams and I must say - this team

was exceptional. The care, enthusiasm, and initiative of the mentors set the stage for an incredible weekend at Camp Hinsch on Fort Campbell. Twelve campers along with their mentors were housed in air-conditioned cabins, providing a nice balance between comfort and immersion in the splendor of the natural landscape.

Camp highlights included the obstacle course where bean-bag tossing, tire hopping, water balloon dodging enthusiasts ran, tumbled, and cheered one another along. During an afternoon at the lake, a few of our campers caught their first fish ever. In creative workshop wooden snakes and lizards were painted with intricate detail while worry dolls and worry dudes were fashioned out of clothes pins and fabric.





"It's a fun place where you don't feel alone if you lost a loved one. The people you are talking and sharing with understand, too!"

Opportunities to honor and remember can take many forms. Each child created a flag of honor and remembrance upon arrival at camp to hang alongside the flags of their cabin mates. In groups gathered under the trees, campers shared photos and objects of remembrance. Around the campfire, children could light a candle in honor of their family member.

The teens thoughtfully created a unique ritual for the TAPS Good Grief Camp-Out which they titled "Fallen Leaves for Fallen Soldiers." The group gathered leaves from around camp throughout the day, and decorated a branch with paints, yarn, and beads. That evening around the camp fire each camper was invited to write a message to their loved one on a leaf.

The adorned branch was present as a symbol of the collective grief, and each of the teens held a candle as a symbol of hope and strength. One by one, campers placed leaves in the fire while one of the teens quietly played the guitar.

"It was fun. We had camp time where we talked about our loved one. We also went fishing and had great food and fun activities. I think that the camp fire was really great. I liked how we got to start a new tradition and it was a really safe environment."

The blend of shared stories, new experiences, exciting challenges, and silly games helped to fill the campers with strength and with hope. Although it will not take the pain away, we can strengthen one another and offer moments of calm, joy, safety, beauty, and connection throughout the journey. *



About the Author



Tina Barrett, EdD, a licensed clinical professional counselor, is committed to strengthening and honoring individuals throughout their journeys with grief. Dedicated to providing top quality grief support programs outdoors, Tina earned her doctorate in Counselor Education. Since 1996 she has specialized in grief camp development, implementation, and staff training. This summer Tina was the Camp Director for the TAPS Good Grief Camp-Out. She lives in Missoula, Montana where she is the Director of Tamarack Grief Resource Center.



TAPS Bulletin

"If Not Me, Then Who?" Fulfilling the Mission of the Travis Manion Foundation

By Jill Harrington LaMorie

1st Lt. Travis Manion, USMC was killed on Sunday, April 29, 2007, by enemy sniper fire in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq while courageously fighting to defend against an enemy ambush. When asked about his second tour of duty in Iraq, Travis consistently responded, "If not me, then who?" His personal legacy lives on through the work of the Travis Manion Foundation, founded by his family and supported by Friends of Travis.

TAPS thanks the Travis Manion Foundation for their continued partnership and for their tireless dedication to our common mission of supporting military survivors. In the face of human suffering, when asked "Why?" the Travis Manion Foundation continues to answer "If Not Me, Then Who?"

On the weekend of July 25th, The Travis Manion Foundation sponsored the TAPS Philadelphia Regional Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp for a second consecutive year. Bringing together more than 130 survivors the seminar provided an opportunity for all to support one another in their journey of loss, grief, and remembrance.

The seminar included a "Taste of Philadelphia" dinner on Saturday evening. Colonel George Bristol, USMC started the evening with a powerful speech, recalling the 16 Marines he commanded who died in the Global War on Terror. He vowed never to forget those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom. The evening continued with music, Philadelphia Cheesesteaks, and a surprise visit by the Philadelphia Mummers. Many survivors commented that this was the first time in a long time that they were able to cry, laugh, and feel comforted knowing they were in the company of their peers.

Remembering a Loved One: StoryCorps Preserves Memories of Surviving Families

By Ami Neiberger-Miller

Every surviving family cherishes memories of the loved one they've lost. StoryCorps offers a way to record those precious remembrances for generations to come.

StoryCorps is an independent non-profit project whose mission is to honor and celebrate lives through listening. Interview facilitators recently contacted TAPS and visited Arlington National Cemetery. They recorded oral history interviews with three families using a conference room space provided by the Women in Military Service to America Memorial.

Sharon Capra came to the interview to remember her son, Tony Capra, who was killed by an improvised explosive device on April 9, 2008, in Iraq. Tony was the oldest of twelve siblings and always loved being the big brother. His father was in the military and traveled a lot, so Tony got to play the role of man of the house.

Sharon remembered when Tony was ten years old and her purse was stolen from a restaurant. "He immediately charged after the person who was running with my purse... so the owner of the restaurant ran out and chased him down and brought him back. You know, he just thought, 'I just need to get back that purse,' so off he ran. So many times, he surprised us by his actions."

As one of the largest oral history projects of its kind, StoryCorps is working to record a portrait of the American experience through stories. Since 2003, thousands of people have recorded memories through StoryCorps. Each conversation is recorded on a free CD to take home and share, and is preserved for generations to come at the Library of Congress. Millions listen to StoryCorps'

award-winning broadcasts on public radio and the web. The organization is funded by donations and a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

If you would like to record an interview about your loved one with StoryCorps, visit their website at www.StoryCorps.org. Interview appointments are available at permanent StoryBooths located in San Francisco and New York, as well as at two MobileBooths that travel the country. You can check StoryCorps' online schedule to find a location near you.

For those not located near recording booths, StoryCorps has created resources to help people conduct interviews on their own. Sample interview questions and a Do-It-Yourself Guide are available for download at www.StoryCorps.org/diy. StoryCorps encourages friends and families to record DIY interviews on the day after Thanksgiving, their official National Day of Listening.

TAPS is talking with StoryCorps about attending the National Survivor Seminar in 2010. We hope they will be able to be on-site to record additional oral history interviews with surviving families.

TAPS 2009 Webinar Series Continuing Education Credits

A webinar, or web-based seminar, is an interactive presentation, lecture, or workshop that is transmitted over the web. In January 2009, TAPS initiated the web-based Professional Education Program for those working with grief and trauma survivors. TAPS webinar presentations are PowerPoint lectures given by invited expert speakers. For mental health professionals, caregivers, family support, medical professionals, or military chaplains, these webinars give vital and up-to-the-minute information for helping those who are grieving the death of a loved one in service to America. Continuing Education Credits are awarded to attendees. For survivors, the webinars can add valuable insight to their experience.

To date TAPS has presented five webinars, including: "Working with the Bereaved: Suicide Risk Assessment" with Dr. David Jobes, "Traumatic Loss: Complicated Grief" with Paul Tschudi, "Counseling Suicide Survivors" with Dr. Madeline Lambrecht, "Suicide Prevention: Educating Military Families" with Kim Ruocco and Carla Stumpf-Patton, and "Reducing Mental Health Stigma" with Dr. Loree Sutton.

Two webinars remain in fall 2009:

Thursday, November 19, 2009
"Masculine Side of Grief and Healing" featuring Tom Golden, LCSW

Thursday, December 3, 2009
"Professionals Working with the Grieving and Traumatized: Recognizing and Caring for Your Own Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue" featuring James S. Gordon, MD

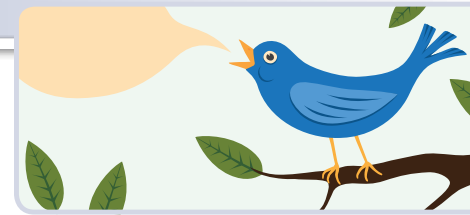
For more information visit :
www.taps.org/professionaleducation
or write to education@taps.org

Expanding our Web Presence TAPS on Facebook and Twitter

By Ellen Andrews

For those who want to stay informed about TAPS news and events, TAPS can now be found on Facebook and Twitter! Through these two online networking sites, TAPS is able to reach out to survivors, supporters, and professionals to share support, information, inspirational messages, and current events.

Facebook is an online network with the mission of giving people "the power to share and make the world more open and connected." The TAPS Facebook page provides a calendar of events including survivor seminars, news and information about TAPS activities, a wall for group members to post messages and photos, and discussion boards. It is a way in which we can come together across the nation to provide support and care!



Twitter is a real-time short messaging service that gives us the opportunity to share information on events in progress, current news, and grief information, along with inspirational messages for support, hope, and healing.

These social media tools help TAPS serve as the front line resource for support for those who have experienced the death of a loved one serving in our Armed Forces. Through Facebook and Twitter TAPS can create awareness of grief and trauma as well as awareness of our mission.

Look for us on Twitter at TAPS4America and on Facebook under Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. Become a fan and keep up to date! Stay in touch. Stay connected. Join TAPS on Facebook and Twitter today! *

★ *Suicide Survivor Seminar 2009* ★

Scheduled for October 9, 2009

By Kim Ruocco

TAPS hosts and participates in events across the country to provide support to those grieving the loss of a loved one who has died while in military service. Through these events, TAPS is able to provide hope and healing. This year from **October 9th to October 11th**, TAPS will host its first Suicide Support Seminar.

TAPS is proud to have gathered some of the leading experts in traumatic grief to help support healing of our suicide survivors. Dr. Frank Campbell, Dr. Jack Jordan, and the Rita Project are among the professionals who will provide traditional healing techniques such as support groups and education as well as innovative techniques such as art, writing, and meditation. We feel that

this holistic approach will provide the most healing atmosphere possible for both adults and children suffering this type of grief.

TAPS also recognizes that peer-based support is invaluable. This is especially true for survivors who are grieving a death by suicide. A survivor of suicide experiences a complexity of emotions that can best be understood by those who have suffered a similar loss. With this in mind TAPS is providing Peer Mentor Training the day before the seminar that is specific to this type of loss and will include a session on how to tell your story. We encourage anyone who would like to help suicide survivors to attend.

TAPS takes pride in being able to continue its mission of compassionate care and comfort to all survivors



Join us in San Diego!

regardless of relationship, circumstance, or geographic location of death. We are hopeful that this first Suicide Survivor Seminar will set new standards for the care of those who have lost a loved one to suicide. To register, go to www.taps.org and click on Events.



Texas-Sized Regional Seminar



TAPS is thrilled at the amazing turnout and support provided for the Fort Hood seminar and we look forward to seeing and hearing from all our survivors! If you are ever in the area please remember to stop by and see us at the TAPS Regional Office located in the Gold Star Center on Battalion Avenue.

*~ Tina Saari, TAPS Director,
Regional Good Grief Camps*

Even the heat of the August Texas sun couldn't keep families away from the first annual TAPS Fort Hood Regional Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. The event was held in conjunction with Fort Hood's new Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) program and hosted by Lieutenant General Rick Lynch. The outpouring of support from Fort Hood helped make this seminar a huge success for the 140 children and 230 adults who traveled to the largest U.S. military installation in the world for the special weekend of honoring and remembering.



Fort Hood Hosts Hundreds



TAPS Helps Families Remember, Share, Celebrate Lives of Those Lost
By Heather Graham, Fort Hood Sentinel News Editor

Military Families came together to remember their fallen, celebrate those lives that have been lost, and share their journeys Aug. 13-15. Adults attended workshops about grief, anger, guilt and coping, as well as sharing sessions where they spoke about their loved ones and their experiences. Most importantly, families learned that they are not alone.

While the adults were participating in workshops and groups, children attended Good Grief Camp where coping strategies and remembrance activities were conducted at age-appropriate levels. Each child was paired with an active-duty soldier mentor. [The mentors came from the ranks of soldiers stationed at Fort Hood who volunteered and were trained by TAPS.] Mentors spent the weekend in uniform to keep the military bond visible, and show they are still here to care for the families.

Sgt. Daniel Powers, 4th Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment spent the weekend hanging out with survivor Hailey Byers. "Events like this give kids

an opportunity to speak out," he said. "It's an awesome program. I am so happy to know someone would do this for my family."

To celebrate the lives of the fallen, family members released 500 balloons at the end of Saturday's session. Red, white, and blue balloons carried notes and messages of love, remembrance, and hope. Following the balloon release, the shared journey continued to Hood Stadium for a celebration filled with military static displays, bounce houses, demonstrations by Fort Hood's military working dogs and the 1st Cavalry Division Horse Detachment, musical performances, food, and fun.

Former Golden Knight and double-amputee Dana Bowman opened the event with a jump from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and a message of hope.

"Without [those who served and died] we wouldn't have the freedom we have today," Bowman told the families. "We have to do the best we can with what we have." *





Martial Arts Program Now Available for T★A★P★S!

The Aaron Norris/Reggie Cochran Martial Arts Program

"One of the greatest gifts a person can receive is professional martial arts training and mentoring. We want to give that gift to you. Our mission is to be able to offer the families of those who have died while serving in the armed forces a scholarship for martial arts training at a school as close to you as possible. We have been very blessed by our Martial Arts training and are excited to offer this opportunity to the families of America's heroes." ~Aaron Norris



Two of America's leading martial artists have teamed together to honor American families who, like theirs, have lost loved ones who were serving in the Armed Forces. Aaron Norris and Reggie Cochran know the importance of caring for the families left behind and are stepping forward to make a difference in YOUR family's life!

Martial Arts training is not just about learning how to kick and punch. It's about learning how to set and accomplish goals. It's about learning how to overcome mental and physical hardships. It's about teamwork and learning how to be more focused at work or school. Get in shape and have fun at the same time. Learn how to defend yourself or compete in sport Martial Arts events.

The Professional Martial Arts Instructor is a great mentor whose guidance and leadership can help you get through difficult times by teaching you how to apply the things you learn in the studio to all areas of your life. Consider all the benefits your family can gain through proper martial arts training and why you should take advantage of this new exciting program. *

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

ALL those who have lost a loved one serving in the Armed Forces, including children, spouses, parents, siblings, and all others.

WHAT ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR?

A free course of instruction at a Professional Martial Arts studio near you in one of more than 4,000 participating locations.

HOW CAN YOU APPLY?

Email info@taps.org with the following information:

- ★ Name of applicant
- ★ Parent's name, if applicant is under 21 years old
- ★ Address
- ★ Phone number
- ★ Email address
- ★ Name/rank/branch of service of your loved one
- ★ Any previous martial arts experience
- ★ Why you would like to be considered for this program

IN HONOR OF WIELAND NORRIS

PFC Wieland Norris, brother of Aaron and Chuck Norris, was killed in action in Vietnam on June 3, 1971. He continues to be an inspiration in their lives as they support the TAPS mission.



News Anchor Focuses on TAPS

★ Kyra Phillips ★

It is an honor to be a part of TAPS. We have to take care of our troops and their families, even more so after a heart-wrenching death. You never get over a painful death, but you can sure learn how to deal with it better if compassionate people are there to help you through it. This is our duty, just as our men and women in uniform carry out their duty to take care of us every day they serve. ~ Kyra Phillips

Kyra Phillips has been fulfilling this duty for years, particularly since she first heard of TAPS from Wandalee Keating, wife of Navy Admiral Tim Keating, now serving as the Commander, U.S. Pacific Command. Having heard so much from Mrs. Keating, Phillips reached out to TAPS about doing a segment on CNN during the Memorial Day Good Grief Camp. TAPS Founder Bonnie Carroll and 8 year old survivor Cierra Becker came on the air to talk about TAPS. Cierra talked about her daddy, how he served our country bravely, and how TAPS had helped her so much since he died. It was a powerful interview and everyone in the control room teared up during the interview.

It was at that point Kyra knew she wanted to help TAPS in any way she could. Says Phillips, "Anything I can do



to bring awareness to their struggles, raise money for TAPS, and help these families heal through allowing them to tell their stories on CNN, I'll do it." Since then, Phillips has volunteered consecutive years as the emcee of the TAPS Gala, as well as honoring TAPS with her presence at the 2009 Gary Morris Golf Invitational.

On weekdays, Kyra Phillips can be seen on CNN where she anchors the 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. edition of CNN Newsroom. Based in the network's world headquarters in Atlanta, Phillips joined CNN in October 1999.

Among her varied assignments for CNN, Phillips has completed four tours of reporting in Iraq. No stranger to the military, Kyra's grandfather, who was her mentor and best friend, served as a communications officer on the aircraft carrier USS *Munda* during WW II. Kyra remembers him as an amazing man, and proud to serve in our armed forces.

Before joining CNN, Phillips served in various capacities reporting and anchoring in Los Angeles, New Orleans, Green Bay, and Lubbock, Texas. She has won four Emmy awards, two Edward R. Murrow awards for investigative reporting, and the Associated Press named her Reporter of the Year in 1997. Additionally, she has won numerous Golden Microphones and other honors.

About TAPS survivors, Kyra tells us, "It is just a constant inspiration. The strength I see in these kids fills my heart. They are losing parents to bombs, accidents, gunfire, even suicide, yet they are strong, loving, and positive children. I admire them so much and I extend HUGE hugs and lots of love." *

**Thank you, Kyra,
for all you do in supporting
TAPS and raising awareness
of military survivors!**



**2009 TAPS
Honor Guard Gala**



**Kyra Phillips interviews
TAPS founder, Bonnie Carroll, on CNN**



**2009 Gary Morris
Golf Tournament**



Gary Morris Celebrity Golf Invitational

• Raises Support for T★A★P★S for a 4th Year •

Pat Boone, Gary Morris, and the Coors Chuckwagon Cowboys Come Together for a Unique Weekend

Report by Christine Burt * Photos by Dave Gill



There is something magical that happens when hundreds of people volunteer their time, talent, and money to help others. This year was no exception when the fourth annual Celebrity Invitational for TAPS gifted more than \$300,000 for the Good Grief Camps and adult Survivor Seminars.

Event Directors Bo and Lynne Cottrell and celebrity host Gary Morris presented two nights of music and comedy, and a glorious Colorado day of golf. Among those making the event successful were music legend Pat Boone, Nashville songwriters Billy Montana, Rob Crosby, Brett Jones and Greg Barnhill, comedian Ralph Achilles, musical entertainers Tony David, Pam Hughes, Mike Sangster and the Hot Toddy Band, and the Lawmen. Major General Mark Graham and TAPS Founder and Chairman Bonnie Carroll and the TAPS children who came gave the guests a grateful reminder of why the event is so important.

The Celebrity Invitational for TAPS has evolved as a "talk of the town" event in Denver. More than 300 guests enjoyed the Songwriters Dinner and Show on Friday night. This fun event becomes intimate and personal when the Grammy-nominated and Country Music Award-winning songwriters perform and tell the stories behind their songs recorded by country greats such as Garth Brooks, Kenny Chesney, Toby Keith, Amy Grant, and others.

The Saturday night show was a sell-out event due, in no small part, to the pit-roasted prime rib barbecued by the Coors Cowboy Club Chuckwagon Crew. This private philanthropic group from Amarillo, Texas, cooked and donated dinner with all the fixings for 480 happy guests. Pete Coors, a prime sponsor, personally served each guest. Steve Grove again hosted the event at his showcase horse ranch in Centennial. Major sponsor DaveCo Liquors donated the beverages.

• Bo Cottrell with ranch owner Steve Grove •

Jake Jobs of American Furniture Warehouse auctioned an original sculpture by legendary cowboy artist Jeff Wolf. The bronze piece, "The Ultimate Sacrifice" depicts a mother clutching a flag with her two daughters holding onto her. It is donated for display at the TAPS headquarters in Washington, DC.

Donors wrote personal notes to 80 children who will receive stuffed bears dressed in military uniform along with the notes. Greg Barnhill performed his original song for TAPS, "Soldier On", which he will record and donate half of all profits. Another inspiring song that brought the audience to its feet was "Til the Last Shot's Fired" by Rob Crosby. At the Celebrity Invitational, the writer himself was accompanied by the a *cappella* Army chorus, Harmony in Motion.

Lynne and Bo Cottrell and their team of 50-plus volunteers are already hard at work and excited about the Fifth Annual Celebrity Invitational for TAPS in 2010, with headliners Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers.

"The Cottrells, Gary Morris, and their whole team are angels for TAPS," says Bonnie Carroll. "For them, it's about honoring the service and sacrifice of so many, by caring for the loved ones they leave behind." *



• Tournament golfers enjoy the day •



• Pete Coors and the Coors Cowboy Club Chuckwagon Crew •



• Event organizers Bo and Lynne Cottrell with Pat Boone •



• Gary Morris •





Remember the *Love* ★ Celebrate the *Life* ★ Share the *Journey*



TAPS 16th Annual National Military Survivor Seminar

Save the Date!

Join us May 28-31, 2010

If you have been affected by the death of a loved one in the military, whether it was a family member, friend or fellow service member, you are warmly invited and encouraged to attend these special days of comfort, sharing, support and information.

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Next Step of Your Journey?

If you have reached the point in your grief journey where:

A certain amount of joy has returned to your life,

You can initiate and maintain new relationships,

And you are beginning to engage more fully in living your life after loss

It may be time to consider reaching out to help others who are more newly bereaved. If you have found comfort, friendship, and healing in TAPS, we have several programs that will allow you to contribute in a meaningful way.

Peer Mentoring

Giving your time and energy to those more recently bereaved in a one-on-one long distance telephone companionship relationship.

Care Group Facilitating

Bringing support and helping others to explore the many facets of grief in a local group setting.

Memorial Giving

Giving monetary gifts to TAPS in memory and honor of your loved one. TAPS is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 Veteran's Service Organization that receives no government funding. Gifts are fully tax deductible.

Workplace Giving

Federal employees can make charitable payroll deductions through Combined Federal Campaign giving. Our CFC Number is 11309. Others may make contributions by specifying Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors through United Way payroll deductions.

For more information visit:
www.TAPS.org





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