

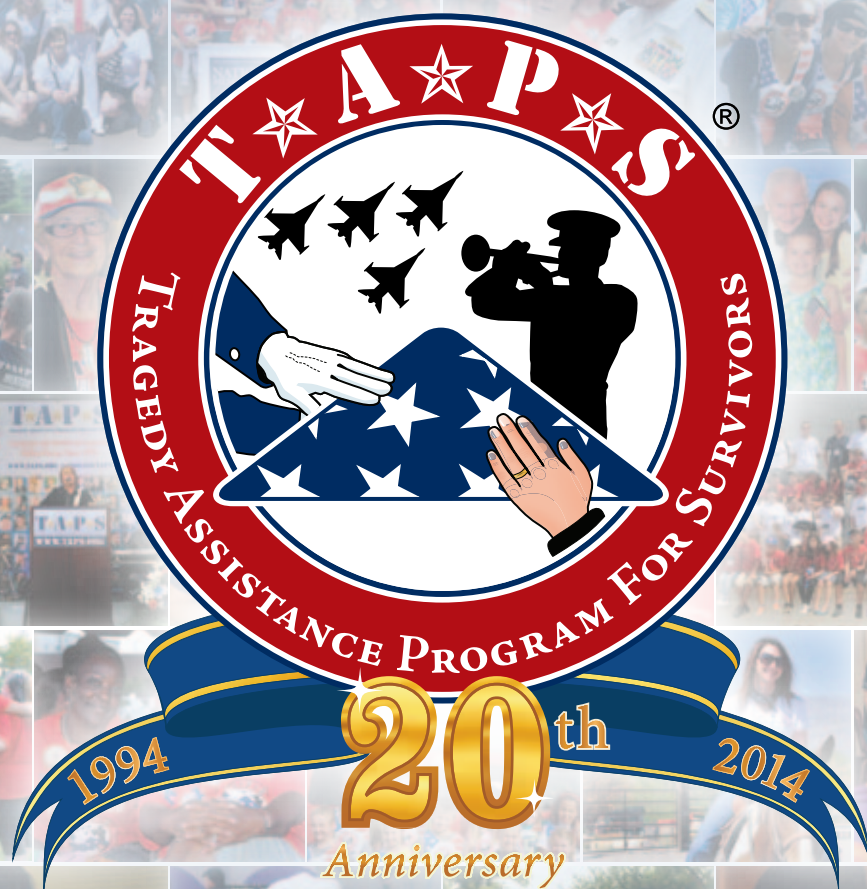
TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

T★A★P★S[®]

Comfort and Support Since 1994

MAGAZINE

FOR THE LOVED ONES OF THOSE WHO SERVED & DIED



20 Years of Hope & Healing

VOLUME 20 • ISSUE 1

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

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★ **About TAPS Magazine** ★

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a national nonprofit 501(c)3 Veterans Service Organization which publishes *TAPS Magazine* in furtherance of its mission to support survivors whose loved one died while serving in the armed forces.

TAPS Magazine is published quarterly and sent free of charge to survivors, their friends and family, service members, and professionals who work with U.S. military survivors.



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TAPS®

Comfort and Support Since 1994

TAPS offers immediate and long-term emotional help, hope, and healing to anyone grieving the death of a loved one in military service to America, regardless of their relationship to the deceased or the circumstances of the death.

TAPS is here for you 24 hours a day 7 days a week

Call us at 800-959-TAPS
Or visit us at www.taps.org

TAPS

SUPPORTS the bereaved survivor through a network of peer mentors. Mentors are trained volunteers who have also lost a loved one in the Armed Forces and are now standing ready to reach out and support others.

PROVIDES the National Military Survivor Helpline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-959-TAPS (8277). Support is available from leading experts in the field of grief and trauma.

HOSTS the TAPS Online Community of survivors, providing secure chat rooms, message boards, blogs, peer group discussion sites, and an extensive website at www.taps.org.

SPONSORS Military Survivor Seminars and Retreats for adults and Good Grief Camps for young survivors in locations across America, giving survivors the opportunity to share, grow, and help each other heal.

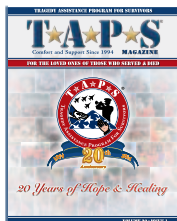
CONNECTS survivors to resources in their local communities and provides grief and trauma resources and information.

NEWS ☆

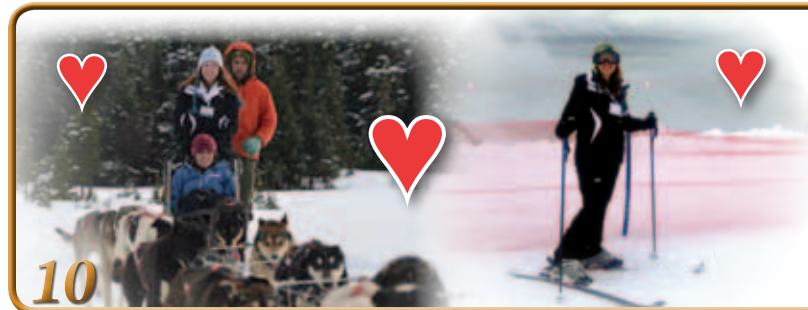
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Let Us Hear From You



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

Kudos from DOD

I want to express my personal thanks for the tremendous contribution that the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors makes to support our service members, veterans, and their families. The direct assistance that you and organizations like yours provide, both on and off military installations, is vital to providing for the care and well-being of our most important asset—our people. Thank you for your dedicated service, both at the national level and through grassroots efforts in local communities across the country.

Secretary Chuck Hagel
U.S. Secretary of Defense

Support in Print

Thank you for another wonderful magazine. I am forever grateful to TAPS for the amazing care they have provided over the years since our sons died. I don't think I have ever read anything more helpful to me spiritually in my grief than the article titled "Struggling to Reclaim My Faith" [Volume 19, Issue 3]. Even after ten years, I continue to find so much healing and emotional support from reading the personal stories of those who have managed to survive unimaginable tragedies. The magazine truly captures the essence of TAPS.

Carol Graham, North Carolina
Surviving mother of
Jeffrey and Kevin Graham

National Seminar

We are just getting through our first year and the way that TAPS has touched our hearts and supported us has been unbelievable. I find myself getting more and more excited with each passing week. Not for Thanksgiving. Not for Christmas. Not even for my birthday, but for the TAPS national seminar in May. I cannot wait to be back around my TAPS families and to talk with them about everything and anything. They all hold such a warm place in my heart. I feel like a kid counting down to Christmas...even though national is still a ways away.

Anna Reich, Florida
Surviving sister of
SGT Kenneth Daniel Reich, Jr.

Support Online

The grief journey is the most difficult journey I have ever experienced, but having the TAPS helpline and other survivors to talk and share with was a godsend. Some days I could only read the postings and barely imagine life beyond my despair. Knowing I was not alone and that others were there who had experienced the same grief helped me make it to a better place. It gave me hope and assisted me in navigating my way thru the darkness.

Peg Portwine, Georgia
Surviving mother of
SPC Brian Portwine

Marine Corps Marathon

Running for TAPS was an honor. My first marathon experience has been amazing because of all you wonderful people. I know the hard work that goes into coordinating groups and events and everything was done so stunningly. Thank you from this humbled and sore first timer.

Kathleen Donohoe, New York
TAPS supporter and fundraiser

Support for Suicide Survivors

Since the suicide of my son, Cody, my address book has changed drastically. This weekend it once again changed, but this time it was being filled with names and addresses of new friends. My family and I are already looking forward to the next National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar. I have only been home a day and am already missing my new TAPS friends, but I am looking forward to staying in touch with all of those I met. Thank you for the opportunity that you have given my family and me. Being suicide survivors, I can honestly say that I don't think there is anything out there that can compare to our experience this weekend.

Peggy Scallorn, Tennessee
Surviving mother of
A1C Cody Allen Scallorn



editor@taps.org



Twenty Years of Hope and Healing

"We shared our dreams, cried until we were sick, and laughed hard with each other because we felt safe enough to do so in our own company." ~ Bonnie Carroll

Safe enough to cry, safe enough to laugh, safe enough to share dreams. Twenty years ago, one of those dreams became a reality with the creation of TAPS: Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors.

Following a 1992 Army National Guard aviation accident that took the lives of eight service members, a small group of survivors discovered new strength and the beginning of healing when they turned to each other for comfort. Connecting with each other, they found the support and understanding they had been seeking. At the time, no formal organization existed that provided a place where they could share their pain while also reflecting on the pride they felt for the service of their loved ones.

From this informal group, Bonnie Carroll took the initiative and began to research best practices of national peer-based support groups. In 1994, TAPS was born, giving military survivors a national organization in which to connect with others and seek support.

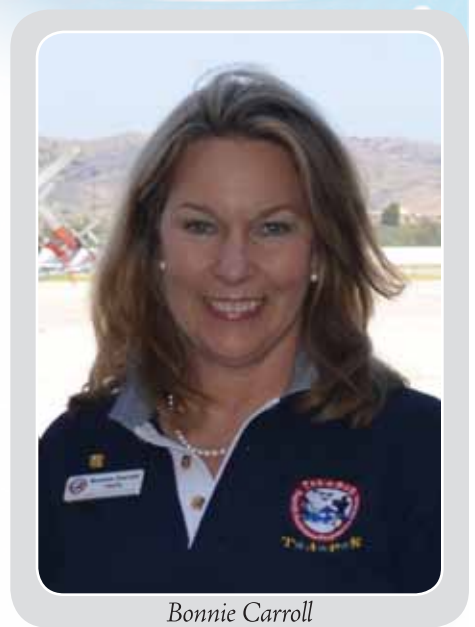
The first TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar was held in the nation's capital in 1995, drawing survivors from around the country. Within a few years, TAPS had caught the attention of senior military leaders.

In 1997, General John Shalikashvili, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, noted the importance of the work TAPS performed, saying, "I have been thinking since I heard about TAPS: why is it that the military never created something like this? And then it became patently clear to me that there's no way to organize something like this in the military. It can only be done by people who have walked this very difficult road before you, and who are now willing to devote their energies and their caring and their heart, to take your hand and say: walk with me, I can help you."

Under General Shalikashvili's leadership, the Chiefs of Staff of each service branch directed their casualty officers to connect families to TAPS, a practice that continues today aided by formal Memorandums of Agreement.

By 2001, TAPS had laid the foundation to be available to assist families during one of our nation's darkest hours. Following the September 11 attacks, TAPS was called upon to support families at the Pentagon. For weeks, TAPS staff and volunteer survivors provided constant support, understanding, and compassion to newly grieving families.

In the years that followed, TAPS embraced thousands who experienced the death of a loved one in the Global War on Terror. Along with the increase in combat deaths, training accidents, fatal illnesses, and suicide



Bonnie Carroll

deaths rose significantly. With the compassionate care that began in 1994 and the work of a small, dedicated group of people, TAPS was able to expand and meet the challenges and needs of the ever-growing number of newly grieving families, while adding programs that bring TAPS services closer to survivors.

Over the years, individuals, groups, and corporations have blessed TAPS with their contributions to our mission. They share the same dedication to honor the service of our men and women in uniform by caring for their loved ones left behind. Through our joint efforts, TAPS has been able to provide help, hope, and healing to more than 40,000 men, women, and children. These individuals can find comfort and strength together, just as a small group of widows did 20 years ago.

It started with a dream...a dream to remember the love, celebrate the life, and share the journey. ★

See page 6 for our TAPS time line of the past 20 years.





Hope & Healing

1994



★ Incorporated as a nonprofit on October 17, 1994 with a national peer support network, information and resources, casework assistance, and 24/7 helpline at 1-800-959-TAPS.

1996

★ Website created at www.taps.org.



1995

★ First newsletter.



★ First National Military Survivor Seminar and TAPS Kids Camp.



1998

★ Newsletter circulation reached 6,000.



"The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors is a wonderful story of courage and commitment. In its countless contributions, TAPS helps to deliver the triumph of tenderness and kindness over pain, suffering, and loss." ~ Colin Powell

1997

★ First weekly chat sessions through America On Line (AOL).



★ Recognized as a Veterans Service Organization by the VA.

★ First TAPS Honor Guard event to raise funds and honor our donors, legislators, and military.



2001

★ Elite military athletes competed in the first TAPS Armed Forces Eco-Challenge, an extreme adventure race raising funds for TAPS.



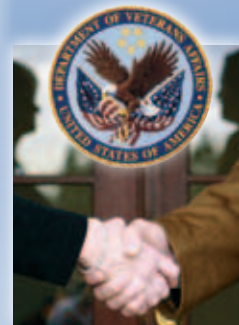
★ TAPS adopted motto of "Remember the Love, Celebrate the Life, Share the Journey".



★ TAPS provided support within the Pentagon Family Assistance Center.

2003

★ TAPS partnered with the VA Vet Centers to expand bereavement counseling to all family members.



2000



★ First TAPS Run & Remember Team ran the Marine Corps Marathon.



★ First online donations.

2002

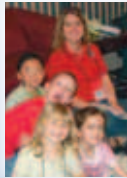
★ TAPS Magazine graduated to full color 24-page publication.



★ First all-day TAPS Peer Mentor Training at national seminar.



2007



★ First Regional Survivor Seminar held at Camp Lejeune.

2008



★ TAPS office opened on Fort Hood.

★ TAPS retreat program began with a Widow's Retreat.

2004

★ TAPS Kids Camp renamed Good Grief Camp.



2009

★ TAPS collaborated with Sesame Street Workshop to produce *When Families Grieve*.



2009

★ TAPS Suicide Survivor program instituted.

★ First National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar for those whose loved one died by suicide.

★ Partnered with USO to send Resource Kits to survivors.



★ First overnight Good Grief Campout.

2010

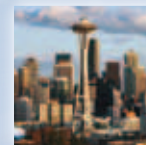
★ U.S. Marine Corps Memorandum of Agreement signed.



★ First printing of *Klinger, A Story of Honor and Hope*.



★ First Quick Series Survivor Guide published.



2012

★ Vice President and Mrs. Biden attended TAPS national seminar.



★ TAPS office opened in Seattle, Washington.

2010

★ Opened office on Fort Carson.

2011

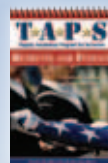
★ U.S. Navy Memorandum of Agreement signed.



★ U.S. Air Force Memorandum of Agreement signed.



★ First Quick Series Guide to Benefits and Finances published.



2013

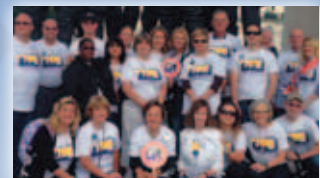


★ U.S. Coast Guard Memorandum of Agreement signed.

★ Joint American/ Israeli Good Grief Camp in Washington, D.C.



★ TAPS survivors joined with counterparts in the United Kingdom to find comfort and healing.



★ TAPS office opened on Fort Bragg.



★ National Guard Memorandum of Agreement signed.

Attending TAPS Events Encouragement for the Newcomer

When someone we love dies, the world as we once knew it no longer exists. We find ourselves on a journey we never expected or wanted to be on. We feel isolated and we wonder if others understand the pain we feel. Deciding to go to a TAPS event can be difficult for the new survivor. We question how we will fit in, how we will be treated, and what the event will be like. Here are the first impressions of some of our TAPS survivors.

DEB BONN

★ **Surviving mother of Elizabeth** ★

We signed up for our first TAPS seminar sixteen months after burying Beth. We didn't know what to expect, but I needed to find someone who understood. I was so afraid when I arrived at the hotel, that I wanted to turn and run. Then someone came up to me, took my hand, and asked me to tell her about Beth. The words spilled out and the tears poured out. Then there were hugs and then someone else came and asked for the story and then another.

The best part about the seminar is the people who attend it. They understand what you are feeling. They understand what you have gone through. They understand your loss. As time goes on, you discover new ways of channeling your energies, pounding out the grief. For us it was joining the TAPS Run and Remember Team. This year we attended a writing class. My husband is not a reader or writer, but he wrote about the special relationship he had with Beth and how much he was going to miss talking with her and hiking with her. He read it aloud and many in the room got choked up. It was beautiful and real.

We have been coming back to the TAPS national seminar for six years now, and we will continue to do so. We always attend the workshop that gives us permission to look beyond the death and remember the person. Each time we attend this workshop, we remember more and more. Some memories that I thought I had lost started coming back.

ASHLEY DEASON

★ **Surviving sister of Michael** ★

Before coming to a TAPS event, I felt very alone and isolated in my grief. I thought no one understood. For me, attending a TAPS seminar was comforting. Initially I was very nervous. But once I arrived, I was surrounded by others who welcomed me with open arms and truly could understand this journey I am on. I met surviving parents, spouses, children, and fellow siblings. I had the opportunity to share about my brother in a group with other siblings. I didn't have to worry about holding back my tears or my smile. I could cry. I could laugh. It was all okay. No one judged me or told me how I should be feeling. I was able to put down my walls for the first time since Mike had died. While I wish no one was on this journey, I have to say I am so thankful I do not have to travel it alone. I travel it with my TAPS family and always look forward to attending the events, as these are opportunities where I get to meet and talk with other siblings who are on this journey, too.



Photos, TAPS Archives

DAWN MILLARD

★ **Surviving mother of Jeremiah** ★

You can expect total, unconditional acceptance. You will not be judged. There are no expectations. Everyone is genuine. I felt free to actually let someone else see who I am and not censor myself...there was no need. Everyone attending has experienced a similar horror. I have yet to find another place where I am not pitied. Rather, we commiserate with true empathy. No matter at what point we are along our path, there is another who has either been there before or is there currently.

ERIN YAGGY

★ **Surviving spouse of David** ★

The best thing about TAPS seminars is, of course, hearing the amazing speakers, but my favorite thing is when people share and I am able to hear how our stories interconnect. I have made so many friends from conversations I start based on what people have shared. It is the place where people "get it," and that is what keeps me coming back to be with my TAPS family.

CHRIS JANNE

★ **Surviving mother of Darin** ★

This past summer my husband and I attended our first TAPS retreat for parents. The best thing I received was the gift of new friends. A special bond was created from a diverse group of parents from all over the country. That bond continues to strengthen. Just this past week my husband and I walked with one of these friends in the Heroes Memorial Walk to raise money for a memorial for the fallen in Missouri. I cried with another friend (via Facebook) as she observed the second anniversary of her son's death. As one of the mothers at the retreat said "It is the best group of people to which we never wanted to belong."

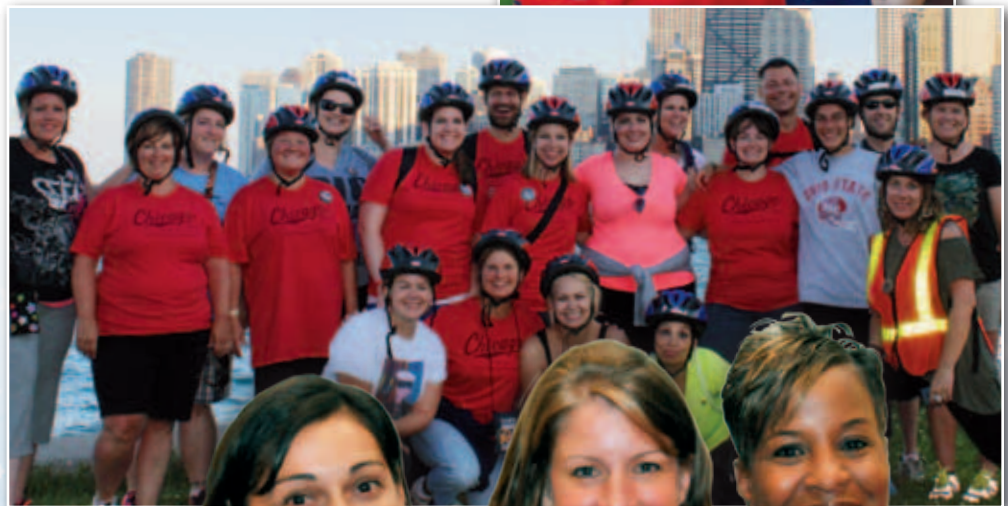
BETH VAN LUVEN

★ **Surviving spouse of Dale** ★

I am a widow of three years and recently attended the TAPS regional seminar in Cleveland. The first evening was friendly and somewhat social as we gathered together for snacks and conversation. I met four new people, all of whom had lost a child in the service. I enjoyed this casual time of sharing, talking, and laughing. The losses here were all types: adult children, spouses, fiancées, parents, and siblings. The previous retreat I had attended (Alaska 2011) was solely for widows, so this was a new venture into the shadowy land of grief.

The second day we all gathered and it was a powerful time of touching broken hearts as we shared each other's pain and grief. Grief seems to be a universal language, crossing all borders of age, culture, religion, and ethnicity. This tragic commonality created an unusual bond. Everyone knew what it was like to lose someone loved and cherished. Everyone knew what the aftermath of death brings to the survivor's life. Everyone knew we would never be the same. And everyone knew that we all need others who have travelled a similar journey.

Many survivors have discovered that TAPS meets the need to find others who understand and care. If you have been hesitating about attending an event, perhaps it is time for you to find the comfort and healing available to you through making connections with other survivors. We hope you will consider attending TAPS 20th National Military Survivor Seminar this Memorial Day. Your TAPS family is waiting for you. For more information, visit www.taps.org. ★



Cold Hands, Warm Hearts

Moving Forward Through Retreats

By Kelly Griffith ★ Surviving sibling of MAJ Samuel Griffith

Sitting on the plane from Seattle to Anchorage, my heart was a mix of emotions. I was headed for the TAPS siblings retreat in beautiful Alaska in February 2013.

Seeing the start of the Iditarod was something I had always dreamed of experiencing, but never thought would actually happen. Like a lot of my dreams to travel the world, I thought it was out of my reach. When it was mentioned that the TAPS siblings might head north for an early-year retreat in the snow, I jumped at the opportunity.

The weeks and months leading up to the trip were filled with shopping at stores like REI and Gander Mountain. I was determined that despite my fear of the cold, I would be warm in Alaska. Somehow, I knew that cold temperatures could not dull the warmth of my excitement to be there and to be with

Somehow, I knew that cold temperatures could not dull the warmth of my excitement to be there and to be with the other siblings that understood the tumultuous roller coaster of grief.

the other siblings that understood the tumultuous roller coaster of grief.

But sitting on the plane, my heart sank when it hit me that my dream of the Last Frontier was coming true because my brother died.

I tried to stay positive and I genuinely enjoyed all of the amazing views. I actually squealed when we landed. Along with the other TAPS siblings on the flight, I made my way to the USO center and quickly met up with a very dear friend from TAPS who had taught me so much about allowing myself to grieve and opening my heart to others again even though it hurt. I was thrilled to see him and share my excitement.

From the moment we stepped out into the crisp Alaska air and saw the snow-capped mountains, I knew it was going to be a wonderful retreat of healing and rejuvenation with my fellow siblings.

I met some of the most incredible people on that trip, some who were further along in their grief and others who were still pretty raw and searching for anyone to tell them it would be okay. No matter how far they were beyond their sibling's death, each one identified with my struggles as I tried to balance the desire for happiness with the sadness of Sammy's absence.

The first day of the retreat was a dream come true. We went snowshoeing near the Alyeska Resort with our amazing tour guide who tromped around in the snow to show us how people were found with beacons when an avalanche occurred. We learned to make an igloo and took photos of each other in front of the North Face. We searched for the tracks of moose and made s'mores over a fire.

And we went dogsledding, something that makes me cry even now when I think about crossing that item off my bucket list. Although we were going nowhere near as fast as Iditarod mushers, I'm sure, my heart nearly burst with excitement as I witnessed Alaska from a whole new perspective behind those beautiful mutts. I'm pretty sure they were just as excited as I was.

Photos courtesy of Kelly Griffith





With the weather abnormally warm for Alaska's dogsledding season, I decided there wasn't a better way to spend a late afternoon than taking in a run in the 20-degree air. My friend and I made our way through a path, up and down small hills that I was unaccustomed to at home. We stopped a couple of times to eat fresh snow since neither of us brought water bottles. It was clear I hadn't been running in a while and even if I had been, I wouldn't have been ready for my feet to travel over the thick snow and the somewhat steep hills. Finally, maybe a half mile out, we stopped just to take in everything around us.

We talked about my brother, Sam, and I confessed that tucked between the pages of my Bible was the last Christmas card I ever wrote to him—the only one that was never sent. I had been lazy about finding the deadline dates to send cards and packages to APO addresses, and the card never left the top of my desk. It was written, addressed, even stamped. And I was so busy in my own life that I didn't take the time to walk it to the mailbox.

I was ashamed of myself, of how naïve I was to assume Sam would always be there to get the card, even if he didn't receive it until he got home from his deployment. The regret was consuming and the card was always with me as a reminder of my selfishness.

My friend shared a story about his sister and how he had to learn to forgive himself of his own regrets. He had to learn to extend to himself the love he so willingly

gave to others. He didn't judge me for my shortcomings. Instead, he listened and encouraged me to grow through the grief process. And grow I did.

It was there in a small clearing on a frosty trail with the sun streaming through the leafless trees that my heart melted right along with the snow from the branches above. I decided to forgive myself—for not sending that card and for not telling Sammy that I loved him one more time. I realized that he would want me to be happy and enjoy the freedoms for which he fought.

There in the great, wide expanse of the Alaskan wilderness, I allowed myself to heal just a little bit. As one of my fellow siblings put it, I had cold hands and a warm heart.

And I felt Sammy with me every part of that trip, from a jaunt in the snow in a bikini to my very first face plant in the snow while skiing, to the sight of the Iditarod dogsled teams racing by me on Fourth Avenue for the ceremonial start of the iconic Alaskan sport. I even felt him beside me as I sang along to Hobo Jim's "I Did, I Did, I Did the Iditarod Trail" with other Reindeer Run watchers.

I chose to replace my regrets with admiration and gratitude for Sam's service to my family and our nation.

I felt his presence as I fit into a tight spot for a group scavenger hunt photo and did my version of an Irish jig to a Flogging Molly song.

I laughed to myself quite a few times when I thought of how much he would have loved the trip. He probably would have loved making fun of me, too.

I chose to replace my regrets with admiration and gratitude for Sam's service to my family and our nation. He was a great Marine and an even better big brother, and I want to share his story. I never want anyone to forget his sacrifice, but even more than that, the amazing man that he was.

I'm so indebted to TAPS and to Sam for making my dream trip happen. And I hope I can give back to a group that has given so much to me by running with the Run and Remember Team, raising money to help support future retreats and the care of family members that so desperately need someone to tell them they aren't crazy as they experience the wide range of emotions that come with the grief journey.

I still have my "bad Sammy days" when the haunting memories of December 2011 come flooding in and with them tinges of regret. But I will always remember the days in the snow and how TAPS helped heal part of my heart. *

Guilt

What It Is And What To Do About It

By Bob Baugher, PhD

After your loved one died, did you find yourself saying things such as: I should've, I shouldn't have, If only, I wish I would've, or why didn't I? If so, you are part of a very large group of humans who have felt guilty following a death. It doesn't matter whether the death took place thousands of miles away or in your home. It matters less whether your loved one died in an accident, in a war setting, or due to an internal war. What matters is that this precious person is no longer in your life.

You awaken each day with the harsh realization that the worst has happened. Your future looks uncertain. Those around you try to help, but grief is a dizzying array of emotions and thoughts. And one of the most common emotions of grief is guilt. As we examine this grief reaction, the most important fact to keep in mind is that guilt is a feeling. You cannot talk someone out of a feeling. That's why, when people say, "Don't feel guilty," we don't respond with, "Okay, thanks. I feel much better now."

TYPES OF GUILT

Let's go into this grief reaction by looking at types of guilt and suggestions for coping with it. See if any of these apply to you:

Survivor guilt: You feel guilty because you are alive and your loved one is not. Or you think it should have been you who died, instead of your loved one.

Benefit guilt: Did money come to you following the death? If you received any sort of benefit, guilt will raise its financial head.

Role-failure guilt: You look back on your life and feel bad because you weren't a good enough (pick one): spouse,

parent, sibling, grandparent, friend, relative. When a death occurs, your brain goes back into the past and reviews all the events and interactions with the person who died. It's easy to dwell on all the past wrongs.

Death-causation guilt: Although you didn't directly cause the death, you may have felt that you should have or could have done something—anything—to prevent the death. If so, you are experiencing death-causation guilt. For example, have you thought any of the following? I should have: talked him out of joining, discouraged him from going on another tour, noticed the warning signs that something was wrong.

Grief guilt: Have you somehow felt that you weren't grieving right: crying enough, angry enough, sad enough, tough enough? Or perhaps you felt that you were crying too much or overly angry or too depressed or weak. Remember, you grieve however you grieve. There is absolutely no right or wrong way.

Moving-on guilt: Have you laughed again? Done things for pleasure? Gotten involved in new activities? Have you felt guilty about it? This is one of the most

significant challenges in coping with a death. After someone we love dies, we still get out of bed (even though we may not feel like it). Time keeps moving and suddenly it's a month. You know when it's been exactly a month because that date has been forever etched in your brain. Months turn into years and you realize that you have no choice but to live your life, even though it's not the one you wanted. Time has forced you to move on. You realize that moving on does not mean forgetting. You will never forget the life this wonderful person lived. But time has moved you forward and guilt arises.

COPING WITH GUILT

Let's look next at some suggestions for coping with guilt. These suggestions came from bereaved people themselves. For my book *Understanding Guilt During Bereavement*, I asked many people what helped them in coping with guilt following the death of their loved one. Here is what they said.

Educate yourself. By reading this article in your *TAPS Magazine* you have taken a step toward making a little more sense of your guilt.

Watch your self-talk. For a time, go ahead and beat yourself up with the should-have and if-only thoughts. But pick a date in the future, such as the birthday of your loved one, and make a decision to cease using these negative terms. When you start to say, "I should've" catch yourself by saying, "Okay, stop this kind of talk." Consider it a gift from your loved one.

Compile memories. Write stories or record them on a



voice recorder or video.

It can be called “I remember the time when...” Contact friends and relatives to ask them for stories, pictures, and videos of your loved one.

Forgive yourself. At various times during the week, ask yourself, “What would it take for me to begin to forgive myself?”

Write a list of all you did wrong and all you did right. It is important to get all the things you feel guilty about out of your head and onto paper. It’s easy to beat yourself up for the negatives, but you also need to look at the positives.

Perform a guilt ritual. In a workshop given at TAPS I passed out small, polished rocks to each participant, telling them it was their guilt rock. They were to take it home and, as time went by and they began to feel less guilt, they moved the rock further away until they could finally throw it away. Another example of a guilt ritual was shared by a TAPS mother whose support group used a guilt candle. She thought about the guilt she felt for letting her son join the military, and when she blew out the candle, it felt like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

Find individual or group support. If you have found that your guilt and your grief are interfering with your ability to work on your activities of daily living, finding a counselor who understands grief and loss may help. Some people have discovered

that a support group, such as TAPS, where people share feelings of grief and suggestions for coping with it, has been the best thing they’ve done for themselves since the death occurred. Many people have said to me, “Bob, without TAPS, I don’t know where I’d be today. It saved my life.”

Create a chat with your loved one. This is an exercise some people find difficult to do. Put down this magazine for a minute and do the following: imagine that your loved one is going to visit you for twenty seconds and say something to you about all the guilt you’ve been feeling since the death. Imagine that this person is standing in front of you. Listen. Go ahead, do this now. What words do you hear? Next, take out a pen and paper and write down those words. Understand that these words are a gift that this person has given to you. Accept the gift.

Channel your guilt. One way people cope with the guilt and anger over the death of a loved one is to channel it into a worthwhile project. Ask yourself, “What

Guilt feelings are our brain’s way of attempting to make sense of something that defies logic. I wish you a life filled with little guilt and many positive memories of the life this person lived.

can I do now to help others in the name of my loved one?”

Guilt is a natural reaction to a significant loss. As the years go on, you may find that guilt may still pay you a visit. Guilt feelings are our brain’s way of attempting to make sense of something that defies logic. However, I hope you will find something in this article to give you insight into the types of guilt and tools for coping with it. I wish you a life filled with little guilt and many positive memories of the life this person lived. ★

About the Author



Dr. Bob Baugher is a psychology instructor at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington, where he teaches courses in Psychology, Death Education, Human Relations, and Suicide Intervention. He has presented workshops on coping with grief at TAPS events and has authored eight books on coping with grief. You may order his 50-page book *Understanding Guilt During Bereavement* by emailing him at b_kbaugher@yahoo.com.

Understanding a Widow's Heart

Part One: Relinquishing Control

By Emma Wright ★ Surviving spouse of 1LT Todd Weaver

FALL & WINTER 2011

During the dark times in our lives—be they tragedy, loss of a loved one, illness, or abuse—our hearts build up walls as a way to protect us from further pain. How much can one heart take, after all? My husband First Lieutenant Todd Weaver died on September 9, 2010. In my own journey of loss, while simultaneously feeling comforted by knowing Todd is in Heaven watching over our daughter Kiley

and me, I also built up my own walls so that I might never have to experience this pain again.

My mindset was one of independence and resilience. Kiley and I were going to be just fine! I wanted nothing except to take care of her and raise her in a way that would make Todd proud. I thought I was strong. I thought I had my head on straight. I was learning that God's plan was above my own plan for our lives. I had to be open to listening for what it was He was teaching us now. I thought I could help others gain a new perspective on death. But I wasn't helping myself.

"Ma'am, would you like me to help you to your car with these bags?" My answer was always, "No, I've managed so far." I imagined Todd in his last moments: fighting for Kiley, fighting for me, fighting because it's right—to the end. It's what motivated me to continue on and make him proud. If I was ready to quit running, put down the trash because it was too heavy, or scream because my patience had worn thin with Kiley's shenanigans, I didn't. I pushed myself through the task because I reasoned that Todd could have done it and so could I. I owed it to him.

But something clicked about a month ago. My "resilience and strength" was a wall—a wall to keep anything or anyone from hurting my heart ever again. I had been punishing myself by avoiding any idea of happiness of heart, as I felt it would be dishonoring Todd. It was my way of matching his sacrifice. I shouldn't have felt that way. And I know that now.



On September 11, 2010, just two days after Todd was killed, our family and friends had gathered in the Sunken Garden at the College of William and Mary. The ceremony remembered those lost on 9/11, and a wreath was added for Todd, as he was a graduate of the college. A man who was a student with Todd had come to pay his respects. He was a familiar face. He expressed his condolences and tried to brighten the mood by talking about some of the good times with Todd.

A few months passed with a few "hello's" and "how are you doing's" from this man, Alex. He began to make himself available to listen to our story. He had become a very good friend. I could share what I was feeling and everything we'd been going through. I enjoyed talking to him and laughing with him—but I couldn't read him. I wanted to make sure he didn't misinterpret the friendship because that door was closed and locked. And then he deployed.

A few more months passed, and the door was still locked. I was just fine with having a friend to talk things out with. And then he was injured. During a training exercise, Alex sustained an eye injury and had to be sent back to the states for treatment.



That's when I decided I needed to go see him. When he opened his door, I unlocked my mind's door.

It is now clear to me that our hearts and our minds will not let us do things that they know we are not ready for. And my heart decided it was ready to take risks again. Because that's who I am. I was built to support the people I care about. To stand beside them in times of trouble. I wish I could have learned this lesson in a book rather than having to live it out—but losing Todd has taught me so much about what I value now, what isn't worth holding onto, and what is. I feel like I've gained an entire life's worth of lessons since Todd's death. Because of that, I have been able to walk with Alex as he navigates the uncertainties of his healing and the future of his career. He had been so helpful to me from early on and I was blessed to be able to give that back.

Todd's fingerprint is permanently pressed into my heart. He will never leave. It is not possible. Our daughter will know him to the best of my ability. My family tree doesn't change because Todd is gone. He didn't walk out the door; I didn't divorce him. He was sent home to Heaven. I have been blessed to be supported by family and friends when the opposite is all too often the case for widows. They get pushed away. Erased.

Knowing how lucky I am to have such a great relationship with my in-laws, I was scared of the thought of changing that, based on my "moving forward." Of course, this was all in my head and totally irrational. I knew they wanted only for Kiley and me to be happy, but I was scared. Scared that a new relationship could be interpreted as a replacement for Todd. I care a lot about what others may think. And maybe that's something I have to work out on my own.

I have accepted that I don't fit in a box. You

can't tie it up with a pretty bow and slap a tag on it. I'm going to be sad...but more importantly I'm going to be happy. And I am. I'm happy that after all we've been through, God brought us a man who has the strength to walk beside us on this journey, accepting this life we live and sharing in it with us.

I love a man in Heaven. I always will. Todd Weaver gave me more in six years than I could ever have imagined for myself, our daughter being the best part. But I also love a man on Earth: Alex. This love doesn't replace what I had with Todd, and I don't want it to. Todd was a part of my life so that I could cherish the memories, learn from them, and grow. One of the beautiful things about Alex is that he gets that. His being in our lives is a gift. He is his own man, different in so many ways from what we had, never replacing, but broadening and building on where we've been.

When I saw Alex after his fourth eye surgery, my heart could not ignore how much this man meant to me. As devastating as this experience has been, both my own and now his, we lean on God and each other, knowing that our plans don't have much to do with God's plans. And it is

His plan to put these challenges in our lives, building our character, creating the experiences that give our lives meaning and value. What kind of a life are we living if we can't come out of it saying we learned a thing or two?

I don't know what the future holds. I'm not supposed to. What I do know is that I'm happy, and hopeful that as we navigate this relationship there will be more to share. Alex, Kiley, and I are on our own journey. And Todd's spirit will always be with us, experiencing the milestones to come right along with us. *

Todd's fingerprint is permanently pressed into my heart. He will never leave. It is not possible. Our daughter will know him to the best of my ability.



Photos courtesy of Emma Wright

Spotlight on Service

★ Nicki Bunting ★

Volunteers are a very important part of the TAPS family. We are grateful for the countless hours they donate and the part they play in supporting the TAPS mission. Volunteers, we salute you!

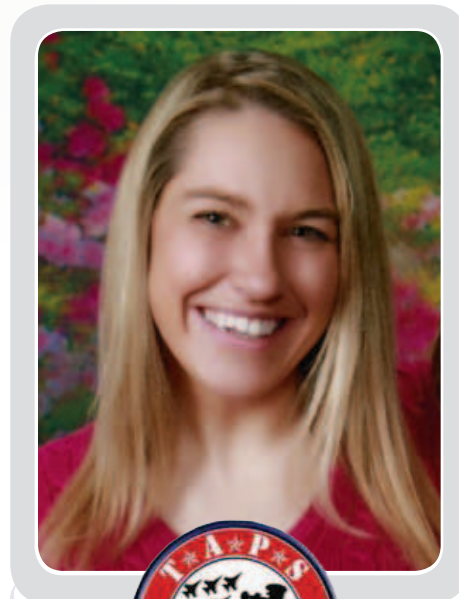
Nicki Bunting may be a busy single mom to two active little boys, but she also cares about helping others and wants to give back to the community. When *TAPS Magazine* caught up with Nicki by phone in December, she was busy getting holiday gift cards ready to mail to military widows who were struggling.

“I know that when I was in my worst of times, I needed a lot of support. To be able to support others when they are in need helps me, too,” said Nicki. She had just gotten home from a cross-country flight to Snowball Express with her older son Connor, and surely could have used a little rest. But she was hustling to get envelopes in the mail before picking up her son Cooper at preschool. That’s typical for Nicki.

Nicki’s husband, Army Captain Brian “Bubba” Bunting, died in Afghanistan in 2009, just days before Nicki found out she was pregnant with their second child. “Knowing that I was pregnant with him was what gave me the strength to keep going,” said Nicki.

A few months into her pregnancy, Nicki founded a 5K race and christened it “Bubba’s Belly Run,” to honor her late husband. TAPS and other Veterans Service Organizations benefited from the proceeds, but the race also helped the public better understand the sacrifices our military make. Thousands of flags lined the course to honor our brave service men and women who died in the cause of freedom.

Nicki got connected to TAPS that year, where she found peer-based emotional support and help with her benefits questions. “TAPS has always been there to answer my questions with the correct answer, which is



*Thank You,
Nicki!*

important—a truly wonderful resource,” said Nicki. “I knew that TAPS was there and that if I needed anything, they would be there for me, no matter when.”

Other members of Nicki’s family also found help through TAPS after Bubba’s death. “For my family, my in-laws, two of my sisters-in-law, TAPS has been there. There are not a lot of resources for siblings. TAPS is the only organization that helps them,” said Nicki.

Cooper never got to meet his father and Connor was only a year and a half old when Bubba died. Nicki worries about

how they will grow up without a dad, but finds support in connecting with others through TAPS. “Knowing that there’s an organization there for us for the long haul puts my mind at ease, and I know my boys will be supported,” said Nicki.

Nicki attended the Alaska Widows Retreat in 2011, where she participated in the 5K, raising funds with the TAPS Run and Remember Team while making connections with other military widows. “I feel like I just kind of have a piece of normalcy back. I don’t feel like an outsider,” she said.

Although she enjoyed holding Bubba’s Belly Run each year, Nicki made the painful decision in 2012 to stop organizing the race. She felt she needed to devote more of her time to Connor and Cooper. She continues to give back to help others in the military community in other ways.

Nicki will receive the Senator Ted Stevens Leadership Award at the TAPS Honor Guard Gala in March. Inaugurated in 2011, the award recognizes a surviving family member of our fallen military who has reached out to help others. “This award means the most to me. Knowing that the people at TAPS who I look up to so much, think so highly of me, means the world to me,” said Nicki.

At TAPS, we think the world of Nicki, and are grateful for her example of giving back to others. ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TAPS welcomes new volunteers. Email us at volunteer@taps.org or visit us at www.taps.org. Click on Support TAPS and then click on Volunteer to explore, sign up, and take our training course.

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You are cordially invited to attend



NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR & GOOD GRIEF CAMP

★ MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND ★

May 23 to 26, 2014
Washington, DC

*Please join us in the nation's capital for a weekend of hope, courage, and love.
An atmosphere of understanding and acceptance awaits you in a safe and supportive environment.
Meet other survivors and share the journey, as we honor our loved ones.*

Remember the Love ★ Celebrate the Life ★ Share the Journey



2014 National Military Survivor Seminar & Good Grief Camp for Young Survivors

You're Invited

Please join us as we Remember the Love, Celebrate the Life, and Share the Journey.

TAPS extends a warm invitation for you to experience a weekend that will touch your heart and strengthen your spirit. Since our first national seminar in 1995, TAPS has welcomed all who are grieving the loss of a loved one who died while serving in the military, providing a full weekend of events for adults and children alike. At the seminar you can connect with others who have suffered a similar loss, learn coping strategies, and hear how others find the strength to live again.

Workshops, support groups, activities, and events—all are structured to provide you with resources and information to help you begin to heal. You will receive support and training from nationally known

grief experts. Equally important, you will receive the precious gift of spending time with hundreds of other survivors, all walking a similar journey through grief. The four day event in our nation's capital begins with registration and opening sessions on Friday and ends with attendance at Memorial Day services at Arlington National Cemetery.

For anyone faced with the loss of a loved one serving in the Armed Forces, TAPS offers comfort and healing, while making time for us to honor our loved ones during the Memorial Day weekend. In the nation's capitol, we are surrounded by the monuments that honor the service and sacrifice of our loved ones and remind everyone that freedom is not free.

Start planning now to join us for a powerful time of support, care, and hope. Whether this is your first TAPS event or you are returning for our annual "family reunion," a friendly smile, an understanding heart, and open arms await you. Join us as we remember the love, celebrate the life, and share the journey together.

★ REGISTRATION ★

Your registration fee assists TAPS in covering the cost of selected meals, workshop materials, TAPS shirt and tote bag, and ground transportation to all special events during the four day conference. The registration fee for children attending the Good Grief Camp assists with the costs of meals, transportation, two Good Grief Camp shirts, a TAPS backpack, and other camp materials.

Along with these tangible items, you will take home the priceless experiences of the weekend and join with others to form vital connections that last a lifetime. This single investment in yourself provides dividends long after you depart. The time we spend with each other and the memories we take home are important as we face each new day and take each new step in our own personal journey of grief.



★ ACTIVITIES ★

WORKSHOPS FOR SURVIVORS & PROFESSIONALS

Our carefully chosen topics include understanding complicated grief; coping with new family dynamics; special issues facing children, parents, siblings, and significant others; and recognizing post traumatic stress.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The national seminar is held in Washington, DC where we attend special ceremonies at the Marine Barracks, the Capitol, and Arlington National Cemetery. There is also plenty of free time for relaxing and visiting with your newfound friends.

PEER MENTOR TRAINING

If you are 18 months beyond your own loss and ready to be there for others, we offer a full day of training on Thursday, May 22, 2014. You will learn more about grief and trauma, gain basic helping skills, and become part of our TAPS Peer Mentor Team. Register for the Peer Mentor Training as part of the general registration.

SUPPORT GROUPS

We offer gentle, supportive discussions that allow you a chance to share with others who are facing similar experiences.

GOOD GRIEF CAMP

TAPS Good Grief Camp is America's first established program for children and teens who have lost a parent or sibling in military service. The camp features sharing, learning coping skills, and having fun in a supportive environment. America's finest adolescent grief and trauma experts support the young survivors as they learn about our nation's capital while forging lasting friendships. In addition to the Good Grief Camp, we feature a parallel program, Honoring Heroes Camp, to assist those who may not need to learn coping skills, but still need to understand that they are part of the military heritage of honoring those who died while serving. Childcare is offered for those under four years old.



Register Online at
WWW.TAPS.ORG



2014 National Military Survivor Seminar & Good Grief Camp for Young Survivors

Register Now!

Start planning now to attend TAPS 20th Annual National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. Online registration is open, and space is limited. Go to www.taps.org and click on the Calendar of Events tab on the left side.

★ LOGISTICS ★

- All events and workshops take place in (or depart from) the Crystal Gateway Marriott on Jefferson Davis Highway in Arlington, Virginia. Additional rooms are available at the adjacent Crystal City Marriott, which is connected by an underground walkway.
- Both hotels offer complimentary airport shuttle service to Ronald Reagan National Airport. Flights into Dulles or BWI require transportation by taxi or SuperShuttle with fares ranging from \$45 to \$70.
- Each hotel offers an on-site restaurant in addition to a fitness center, indoor pool, and access to the Crystal City Shops and eateries. Room amenities include TV, telephone, clock radio, hair dryer, iron and ironing board, and coffeemaker/tea service.
- For information about free airfare through Fisher House Foundation's Hero Miles program, please check the seminar information pages on the TAPS website. The last day to apply for Hero Miles is March 26, 2014.
- To make your hotel reservation, visit the seminar webpage at www.taps.org to get our special conference rate of \$129.00 per night. The last day to register for the seminar and reserve a room is April 29, 2014.
- The seminar registration fee of \$195.00 includes selected meals, workshop materials, ground transportation to all special events, and a TAPS shirt and tote bag.
- The Good Grief Camp registration fee of \$75.00 per child assists in paying for selected meals, transportation for field trips and events, two Good Grief Camp shirts, a TAPS backpack, and other camp materials.
- Events begin with check-in on Friday, so plan to arrive by 9:00 a.m. on Friday, May 23. Departure should be scheduled two hours after the end of the event you attend on Monday, May 26, to allow for our return from the event. For example, if you attend the ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, schedule your travel after 3:00 p.m. since the event ends at 1:00 p.m. If your plans require that you return home to participate in local Memorial Day ceremonies, you may wish to schedule your departure Sunday evening, May 25, after our closing ceremony ends at 4:00 p.m.
- A limited number of scholarships are available if you are facing financial challenges. Please call TAPS at 800-959-TAPS (8277) or email scholarships@taps.org for more information. *



Dear Son

By Gary McHenry ☆ Surviving father of LCpl Christopher McHenry

*Dear Son, come walk beside me.
Let me tell you what I've seen.
It's a story of a bright young man
Who became a great Marine.
Sometimes he drove his parents nuts
With things he'd say and do.
He'd make them laugh and make them mad,
But through it all they knew
That God had plans for their young man
To help him be the best.
His pride and courage guided him;
The Marine Corps did the rest.
He went to war and came home safe.
His parents so relieved.
His war was over, so they thought,
But wrongly they believed.
The battles waged inside their son
Were going to be lost.
No help would come, for no one knew
What would be the final cost.
One day Marines came to his folks
Three solemn-faced young men.
They could not hide the sadness
Within each one of them.
His colonel said, "He was a water walker,"
A term used by Marines
For soldiers of exemplary pride
That accomplished missions by all means.*



*I guess God had one more mission,
To put him to the test.
God called him home to guard the gates.
God knew he was the best.
Now walk ahead, Son, don't look back.
For this story has been true.
It hurts so bad to tell you that
This story is of you.
So take your spot in Heaven, Son,
The one God called you to.
He has you in his arms, but knows
Our hearts are with you, too. ☆*

Love,
Your dad Gary McHenry
Surviving father of Christopher McHenry
July 18, 1988 – March 4, 2013

Photo courtesy of the McHenry family

On Traveling Back Revisiting Favorite Places Without Your Loved One

By Marilyn Collins, Surviving mother of SGT James S. Collins, Jr.

Grief is both my friend and my enemy. My friend, because it is always with me, a constant companion, ever present. It is there sometimes just as something I am aware of, sometimes as sadness, sometimes as something more deeply felt. It has changed over the years but is still with me and always will be. It can also be my enemy because it gives me no warning about when it will change its aspect.

A few months ago, grief surprised me again. A dear relative was unexpectedly hospitalized in Traverse City. He would be there for a few weeks and my husband and I felt we needed to drive from the Detroit area up north to see him.

Traverse City is a Michigan gem. It lies at the base of two peninsulas, Old Mission and Leelanau. Thousands of Michiganders journey every year to cottages “up north.” On a day at the cottage when it is too cool to swim, Traverse City is where you go. It’s the place where you meet friends from the city who are somehow more relaxed up there. It offers a change of pace when you need a break from the summer routine.



You shop, eat, buy ice cream, drive up one of the peninsula arms, do special family things, and create memories that linger always. Journeying up the peninsula, you see wine country, lighthouses, unique little shops, and restaurants.

Almost every summer when we were raising our kids, we spent a few weeks

up north. Traverse City was part of our family life. My son Jim loved it as a child and later went to school for three years at Northwestern Michigan College, located right on Traverse Bay. I think his dream was to live up there someday.

Since Jim died, we haven’t been able to go back to Traverse City. We have so many happy memories, so many places associated with our son there. The walks around the beautiful college campus, the park where he first pushed his son on a swing, the wooded places where we took long walks, the different houses he lived in while a student, the special place at the top of a hill that was perfect for star gazing, all the special restaurants. We had shared wonderful days there with him, both as a child and as an adult. It seemed that every street, every park, every neighborhood was associated with Jim. In the six years since Jim’s death in Iraq, we had both agreed we were just were not ready to handle all of those memories and associations by visiting again. But now, we felt obligated to make that hospital stop.



"No problem," my husband said. "The hospital is on the outskirts of the city, and I have a route that doesn't go by anything special." I breathed a sigh of relief. I could be a Good Samaritan for our relative, but not have to deal with any special stress. Somehow, remembering those special days was fine, but reliving them by actually being there again was too much.

Everything was great until the night before we were ready to leave. My husband walked into the room, map in hand, stricken. He had decided to get the exact address of the hospital and discovered that in the years since Jim's death, the hospital had been moved. A big, brand new building stood right in the center of town now. We could find no route to get to the new hospital that didn't take us through parts of town that were too familiar.

No way to get there but to go by the woods where we had taken a long special walk on the kind of beautiful fall day that takes your breath away. The picture on the mantle I had of that day was a pleasure to look at. It warmed my heart as I remembered the scent in the air, the beautiful colors, how tired I had been at the end of the trail, the laughs we had shared at the dog's antics. All of that was a help, but seeing it again, being there again...no.

Or we could go the other way around, passing by The Great Wolf Lodge Water Park where we had spent a lot of my son's final leave, less than a month before he died. I remember that during the visit Jim asked me to stay in the "river" with my

grandson while he went to get a quick bite to eat. I must have gone around that river 100 times. My skin was wrinkling; my legs were burning. Where was Jim? Suddenly he came rushing up, shaved head, dog tags jangling—so obviously a soldier on leave.

"Mom, I'm sorry. People kept coming up and buying me drinks and food and asking where I was stationed." He looked so surprised and proud. That day, as I dragged myself out of the current, I just rolled my eyes at him. But now, I wish I could shake the hand of every one of those wonderful people.

And what about Sleder's Family Tavern? How many happy meals had we shared there?

And the park where we all had gone sledding on a winter visit to the campus with our grandson?

And on and on. No! I could not do this. It wasn't time yet. I felt that sense of panic that had been so present in those first few months of loss, when my grief was so uncontrolled and so unfamiliar.

But this wasn't right. Would I spend the rest of my life avoiding a place we all loved? How could I do that? Jim wouldn't like that at all. What to do? Suddenly, the answer came to me and it was so simple. I would not go now. Our family would all lovingly understand and sympathize and support our decision as they always did. But some day I would go back, and I knew how.

I would go back with Jim's son. I would share all of this with him. I would show him the park and the swing. We would walk on the long trail around Boardman Lake, and I would remind him how Jim's black Lab loved to swim far out and bring sticks back. We would go to Sleder's, and I would ask if he remembered how his dad had held him high so he could kiss the moose. We would go to the college campus and see where his big tough Marine dad had created the pottery art pieces that are such treasures to us now. And it wouldn't be upsetting; it would be joyous to share all of these memories with the person my son loved most in the world.

And if that trip with my grandson never quite works out, we will do what we would have done if we hadn't been lucky enough to have our grandson. We will go back ourselves and walk those paths and see those places, and focus on our joy at Jim's life, rather than our sadness at his death. We will celebrate his life and celebrate the time we had with him on all those wonderful days.

And grief?

Grief will be my friend again —at least for a while. *



Photos courtesy of the Collins family



Why Rituals Help Us Mourn...and Heal

By Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

I often say that when words are inadequate, we should turn to ritual. Nowhere is this more true or important than after someone we love has died. In this article, I will explain why rituals are essential and how you can continue to use the power of ritual to help yourself and your family heal, even long after the death and funeral.

What is a ritual?

Rituals are symbolic activities that help us, together with our families and friends, express our deepest thoughts and feelings about life's most important events. Baptism celebrates the birth of a child and that child's acceptance into the church community. Birthday parties honor the passing of another year in the life of someone we love. Weddings publicly affirm the private love shared by two people.



What do such rituals have in common? First, they are typically public events. Families, friends, church members, villages, even nations—any group with strong emotional or philosophical ties—may create and enact a ritual, providing a support system for common beliefs and values. Rituals unite us.

Second, most rituals follow established, cultural-specific procedures. American high school graduations, for example, begin with a procession of students in cap and gown, include one or more speeches, and culminate after the graduates march across a platform to accept their diplomas. As with all rituals, the details will change somewhat from graduation to graduation, but the general pattern always remains recognizable. The predictability of ritual helps participants feel at ease. It also lends a sense of continuity, of the distillation of generations past, to those events we find most meaningful.

Finally, and perhaps most important, rituals are symbolic. Wedding rings, christening gowns, mortarboards, and gold watches all symbolize important life transitions and commitments. Not just the objects but also the very acts of ritual are symbolic, as well.

Rituals are symbolic activities that help us, together with our families and friends, express our deepest thoughts and feelings about life's most important events.

We blow out candles at birthday parties, for example, to symbolize the completion of another year. At a graduation ceremony's end, the graduates toss their caps into the air to symbolize their newfound freedom. What words could we possibly utter that would capture so well our feelings at these moments? The symbol of ritual provides us a means to express our beliefs and feelings when words alone will not do those beliefs and feelings justice.

Funerals and other rituals after a death

Like the other types of ritual I have mentioned, the funeral is a public, traditional, and symbolic means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about the death of someone loved. Rich in history and full of symbolism, the funeral ceremony helps us begin to meet a number of our fundamental needs as mourners.

Funerals help us:

- ✦ Acknowledge the reality of the death.
- ✦ Give testimony to the unique life of the person who died.
- ✦ Encourage the expression of grief.
- ✦ Provide support to mourners.
- ✦ Embrace our faith, beliefs, and questions about life and death.
- ✦ Find hope for our continued living.

But the importance of rituals for mourners doesn't end with the funeral. I hope you have been privileged to experience personalized, meaningful funeral ceremonies for the people in your life who have died. But whether you did or did not, here is the wonderful news: you can still marshal the healing power of ritual as you continue to mourn and heal.

Even long after the funeral, you and your family and friends can plan and carry out simple rituals that will help you continue to meet these essential needs of mourning.



Below are several ideas.

Hold a tree planting.

Trees represent the beauty, vibrancy, and continuity of life. A specially planted and located tree can honor the person who died and serve as a perennial memorial. This can be particularly helpful if there is no gravesite or cremation niche to visit.

The tree is a symbolic, physical presence that helps represent the person who died. When you visit the tree, it helps you remember the person who died and convert your grief (what you think and feel on the inside) into mourning (the outward expression of your grief).

Invite friends and family to attend. If the hole is dug and the tree is already placed inside it before the gathering begins, participants can help shovel loose dirt around the root ball and finish the planting.

You might write a short ceremony for the tree planting. Or ask a friend to help write one. A gathering prayer or message, a short reading, an informal sharing of memories, and perhaps a song are all you need. Consider a personalized metal marker or sign, too.

Have a candle-lighting ceremony.

Invite a small group of friends. Place a lit candle in the center of a table, and form a circle around the table, with each person holding his or her own small candle.

Have each person in turn light his or her candle by holding it to the center candle's flame. As they light their candles, participants are invited to share a memory

*Spending this day
in this way in the
company of others
who love you and who
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journey through grief
toward healing.*

of the person who died. At the end, play a song or read a poem or prayer in memory of the person who died.

Set aside the anniversary of the death as a holiday.

As mourners, we usually don't look forward to the anniversary of the death. We often feel particularly sad and helpless on this day. But if we turn the anniversary day into a ritual, we give ourselves something meaningful and healing to do when ordinary words and going about our day-to-day routines are inadequate.

Consider setting aside the anniversary as an annual holiday. Each year, visit the grave or scattering site. Or plan a ritual activity, such as going on a hike, hosting a family dinner, volunteering at the homeless shelter, or whatever seems most fitting.

Consider commemorating the life that was lived by doing something that the person who died would have appreciated. What were his hobbies and passions? Is there something you could turn into a ritual activity either on the anniversary of the death or on his birthday that honors what he cared about?

This special day can include a simple ceremony. Gather at a certain time and place and say a few words. Invite others to do the same. After the ceremony and activity, if there is one, share a meal.

Spending this day in this way in the company of others who love you, and who also loved the person who died, can help all of you on your journey through grief toward healing.

A final word

Now that I've given you a few ideas about how to use rituals in your ongoing journey through grief, you may be able to think of others. I would love to hear from you about your experiences with rituals in grief and invite you to email me at drwolfelt@centerforloss.com.

Remember: when words and interior thoughts and individual efforts alone are inadequate, we create rituals. Rituals in grief are especially powerful. I wish you good grief and Godspeed in your journey.*

Photos, TAPS Archives

About the Author



Dr. Alan Wolfelt is a respected author and educator on the topic of healing in grief. He serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and is on the faculty at the University of Colorado Medical School's Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Wolfelt has written many compassionate, best selling books designed to help people mourn well, so they can continue to love and live well. For a complete listing and to learn more about the natural and necessary process of grief and mourning, visit www.centerforloss.com.

Boxes in the Attic

Part 2, You Can't Take It With You

By Betsy Beard ★ Surviving mom of SPC Bradley S. Beard

It is said that one of the tasks of grieving is to relocate the loved one from being a physical presence to that of residing in our hearts and memories. It is not an easy task. And we really don't want to do it. We just want them to come home and walk in the door. And after a few years, we get it. They're not coming home. They won't be watching this movie, reading that book, or wearing those clothes, but some of us still hold on to their belongings as connections to the past we shared.

At some point, if we were the recipients of our loved one's personal effects, we have to address all the material objects, household goods, clothes, and favorite items. As much as we might want to preserve all our loved one's important possessions, we can't take them with us when we die—any more than they could. In the meantime, our families, friends, and society at large seem to believe we are keeping too much and taking too long, regardless of the quantity of belongings or the time elapsed.

How long should it take before we are ready to part with some of their possessions?

Who should decide when it is long enough? How much is enough? How much is too much? When will we know that it might be time to rearrange?

Our own hearts will know when we are able to adjust to the absence of both our loved ones and their belongings.

Sorting through personal effects and household goods can be a trauma all its own, regardless of when we do it. Handling the things our special person collected or wore or loved just plain hurts. Memories sweep in and threaten to overwhelm us. Fresh grief wells up within our hearts. It is a daunting task and one that can be saved until we are ready to do it or until space considerations and emotional changes dictate that the task must be completed.

Fortunately the task can be accomplished in small stages. We can decide to sort through one drawer or one box. We can decide to spend 15 minutes, an hour, or a day. The timing and the amount of sorting are up to us. We can choose to invite someone to help, or we can do it alone.

When our family passed the third anniversary of Brad's death, we were preparing to move to a smaller home. It seemed like a good time to go through the boxes and trunks that the Army had sent us, both from Iraq and from Korea where Brad was posted before deploying to Iraq. Even after three years, it was excruciatingly painful to touch and handle the things that Brad cared so much about and valued so highly.

At the time we thought we knew the drill—Brad is not coming home—but it still hurt to give away his precious things, much less throw anything away. Nevertheless, we sorted and sifted in preparation for moving. We made many of Brad's clothes available to extended family who could wear them or who wanted something as a keepsake. Almost everything else went to a room in the new house that came to be called Brad's room, simply because it was filled with his things: his clothes, his bedspread, his shoes, his books, his CDs, DVDs, important papers, medals, and Army uniforms.



How long should it take before we are ready to part with some of their possessions?

Who should decide when it is long enough?

How much is enough?

How much is too much?

Some things went into “his” dresser and “his” closet. A lot of things were boxed and stored under the bed, on the closet shelves, and in the attic. At the three year mark, nothing much was discarded. We kept all the books to read, the movies to watch, the CDs to listen to, and the computer to use.

Over the next five years, the computer and other electronic devices wore out and were tearfully disposed of. Some clothes were worn and a few books were read, but everything else languished on shelves, unnoticed, unused, and collecting dust.

Finally, we decided that it was time once again to tackle the job of making the hard decisions. We were older, we were further along the path of healing, and we were finding that we did not need to save everything in order to function. We didn't need everything to assure us that Brad was and always would be an important person in our lives. It was time for a spring cleaning, and after eight years we thought we knew the drill—Brad really wasn't coming home—but it was still hard to handle his things and make the necessary choices. Divesting ourselves of more of his belongings was still painful, but with each item we would ask ourselves, “Do we need this item?” Is this item helping us maintain our equilibrium in the world?

Will we be distraught without it? Is it essential for maintaining our connection to Brad?

It still hurt to touch and smell the things that had been stored away or displayed on shelves and walls. But this time we were able to

condense, consolidate, give to Goodwill, or discard. It took several weeks, because we could not work more than an hour or two at a time. It was emotionally draining and physically exhausting, but we found that it became less painful as we progressed through the boxes and stacks. With each passing decision, we were breathing a little easier.

This time, we worked through the remaining clothes and uniforms. We didn't really want or need his general issue socks and undershirts, nor his frayed jeans, team sports gear, or size 14 shoes. We unframed quite a few photos and all his medals and certificates. Those fit easily in a single scrapbook that we can page through when we feel the need. We kept only a few books that we truly might read. We spackled the nail holes and painted the room and got a new bedspread. His old one was never our favorite anyway. Now the whole room felt somehow lighter and brighter.

We also sorted all the things from the immediate aftermath of Brad's death: multiple newspaper accounts, sympathy cards, receipts. In all there were more than 1,000 cards and we only kept the ones that had a personal story about Brad. The file box of military papers was next.

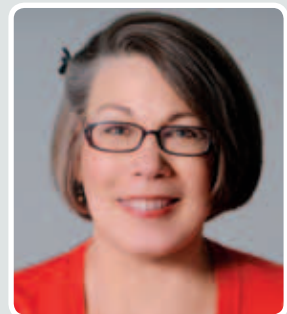
Some photos and papers were scanned and stored on a disk. We kept a few items for the scrapbook and laid the rest on a bonfire. We cried as his dreams and aspirations were sent heavenward in the smoke.

All of these actions mean that Brad is less visible in our living space. But we find that we don't need the constant physical reminder of who he was. We are no longer afraid that we might forget him. We can condense Brad's things because his things are not the only part of him that remains.

We are traveling lighter these days. We still have our photos and our written memories. They still cause simultaneous joy and pain. We have kept a few items, but we know that Brad doesn't reside in his things. He lives in our hearts, right where he has always been. The boxes and the belongings were only a reflection of who he was and how he spent his time, symbols of what was important to him at the time he died. But the legacy isn't the stuff he left behind. It's the laughter, the lessons learned, the lift of the spirit, and the stories we tell. *

Visit www.taps.org/magazine/archives.aspx to read Part 1 of Boxes in the Attic.

About the Author



Betsy Beard has served as the editor of TAPS Magazine since 2008. She lives in North Carolina with her husband, Randy. Their lives were forever changed by the death of their only son, Army Specialist Bradley Beard, who was killed in action in Ar Ramadi, Iraq in 2004. In the years since Brad's death, the family has found help, hope, and healing within the TAPS family.

Finally, we decided that it was time once again to tackle the job of making the hard decisions. We were older, we were further along the path of healing, and we were finding that we did not need to save everything in order to function.

I Didn't Cry This Morning

By Dennis L. Apple, Surviving father of Denny Apple

During my lifetime I have endured a few severe winters. These were the winters when the wind was bitter cold, when several days passed without the appearance of the sun. The snowfall was extremely heavy, and travel was difficult. During those winters, I eagerly looked forward to the first signs of spring. As we approached the end of February and rolled into March, I knew the signs to look for. We have a tulip bed in our front yard, and as I pulled out of the driveway each morning, I took a quick look at it, wondering when those first green shoots would push through the soil and appear. When I saw these first signs of spring, I knew it wouldn't be long until I would see the color of springtime once again. I gained hope from those green shoots, because I knew what would follow.

Every newly bereaved person I talk with always wants to know how long his or her pain will continue, how long his or her bitter winter of sorrow will last. It's a natural question to ask. After all, grieving is the hardest work we do, and it's only natural to want to know, "When do I get a break from this?" The

soul-crushing weight of grief is almost more than a person can bear, and we often wonder if the day will ever come when we'll smile or laugh again. Then, when we do start to get a "break" from our pain, we often feel guilty. This is the paradox to grieving

that is often misunderstood. Sometimes we don't want our grief to be taken from us, because the grieving itself is a connection between us and our dead loved one.

As mentioned earlier, we were in *severe* shock during those first few days and weeks. After a while, we would have brief moments when we actually thought we were getting *over* it. Hope springs eternal. It's probably a good thing I didn't know how long our winter of grief would continue, because it was much longer than I expected. Along the way, there have been times when I would get a glimmer of hope that we might survive it. Let me tell you about the signs I noticed in my life.

In the beginning, the pain was overwhelming and unbelievable. Denny had died on the couch in our family room, and I tried to stay away from that room, even though it was the most popular room in our home. In order to make my way to the garage where the car was kept, I had to walk close to the very place where he had taken his last breath. It took a while, but finally I was able to do it without seeing him on our couch.

The next thing I noticed was the photographs. While I was in heavy shock, I could look at his photograph as I mourned for him. However, a few weeks after the funeral, it was simply too painful for me to look at Denny's photos. My wife felt the same way and had difficulty looking at the photos of him when he was younger. I'm quite certain it was years before I could

look at his photo without feeling a twinge of pain.

It may take years before the green shoots of hope begin to appear in your life. Be patient and keep looking for them. They will reappear after your long winter of grief.

Below is a list of signs that may help you recognize that you're getting better:

1. You don't feel compelled to tell *everyone*—even strangers—about the death.
2. You don't cry yourself to sleep *every* night.
3. You sleep well and can awaken feeling rested.
4. You can walk past his or her room and not be reduced to tears.
5. You can go to the grocery store and not be upset when you see his or her favorite food on the shelf.
6. Your food starts to taste good again and your appetite returns.
7. You have the desire to get out of bed and face the day.
8. You can walk or drive past the place where he or she died and not be consumed by the pain of your loss.
9. You're no longer overwhelmed with sadness when you hear the lyrics to certain songs.
10. You can place flowers on his or her grave and not be overcome with sadness.
11. It becomes easier to face his or her birth and death dates on the calendar.
12. You really do want to try to live again.
13. You enjoy going to the place of worship and begin to feel renewed in your soul.

Every newly bereaved person I talk with always wants to know how long his or her pain will continue, how long his or her bitter winter of sorrow will last. It's a natural question to ask.



It may take years before green shoots of hope begin to appear in your life. Be patient and keep looking for them. They will reappear after your long winter of grief.

14. You start noticing flowers, birds, the sky, and all living things in a new way.
15. You have a strong desire to redeem your loved one's death by using it to help others.
16. You start to take an interest in a hobby or an interest you had before your child died.
17. You have empathy for someone else who's suffering a hardship.
18. Your short-term memory starts to gradually return.
19. You can look at your loved one's picture and remember the good times instead of the pain of his or her death.
20. You can talk with others about your loved one and laugh about the funny and interesting things he or she did.
21. You look forward and plan for the holidays instead of dreading them.
22. You can go to favorite restaurants and eat without thinking of the empty chair and the person who used to sit across from you.
23. You can attend the milestone functions of your friends and actually be happy for them instead of crying over what you'll never have.
24. You can look at other people's children and grandchildren and actually be happy for the parents and grandparents.
25. You have forgiven—or are trying to forgive—the person you feel is responsible for your son's death.
26. You can forgive yourself for things you said or things you should have said and didn't.
27. You have forgiven God for not stepping in and saving your loved one's life.
28. You have forgiven your loved one for his or her part in the death, especially if he died by suicide.
29. You catch yourself singing once again.
30. You cherish your family and friends in a new way and find new ways to express your love to them.



The pain of our loved one's death has ripped us open, causing a nearly mortal wound. We're staggered by this wound and are trying to get along the best we can, hoping we can live through the pain. We learn to make adjustments, realizing that everything has changed and that we'll have to search for or create new normalcy. Gradually—ever so gradually—a scab will form over the once-bleeding wound, and we'll find new ways to cope, to go on.

Since Denny's death almost 17 years ago, I've had several people ask, "Do you ever get over it?" I always answer by telling them, "No, you never get over it. It gets different, but you never get over it." For us, the first five years represented the worst of the nightmare. But we'll have a big scar on our hearts forever. *

[Excerpted from *Life After the Death of My Son: What I'm Learning* (2008) by Dennis L. Apple.]

About the Author



Dennis L. Apple is on the pastoral staff at College Church of the Nazarene in Olathe, Kansas, where he oversees recovery and support groups among other duties. He is the author of *Life After the Death of My Son: What I Am Learning*, and his story was featured recently on NPR StoryCorps. He also is a regular workshop leader for The Compassionate Friends (TCF). Dennis and Buelah's remaining adult son Andrew serves with the Army Reserve Medical Command and recently returned from Afghanistan. You may contact Dennis Apple at firstof1019@gmail.com.

Finding Peace Without All the Pieces

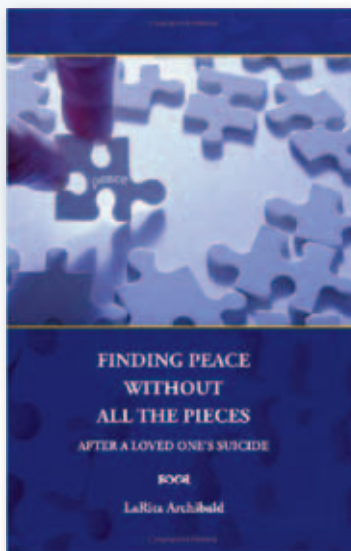
By LaRita Archibald ★ Reviewed by Rebecca Morrison

A few months after the suicide death of my beloved husband Ian, my academic side and counseling training kicked in. I decided I was going to learn as much as possible about how to recover from losing Ian to suicide. I scoured Amazon for books on suicide loss and healing and ordered them all. I scanned through a couple of them, but nothing really spoke to me. The books went into a box somewhere and were shoved aside during my move from Texas to Washington, DC.

Last October, I attended the TAPS National Suicide Survivor Seminar in Colorado Springs. I met amazing survivors, learned so much about my own grief journey, began to heal, and actually had a lot of genuine laughs with amazing friends. At the seminar I had a conversation with my dad about books that could be helpful to our healing. Unfortunately, I couldn't personally offer very many suggestions. So, upon returning to DC, I decided to actually sit down and read one.

I spent Christmas break reading the beautifully honest book, *Finding Peace Without All the Pieces: After a Loved One's Suicide* by LaRita Archibald. LaRita is the surviving mother of Roger Kent Archibald whom she lost to suicide in 1978. *Finding Peace Without All the Pieces* is the sincere, straightforward roadmap to putting your life back together after the suicide death of a loved one.

In the early pages of the book LaRita warns her readers that there will be sections that they may not be ready to read. She gives us permission to skip them or come back to



"Believe it, my wounded friend. There will be a time when you won't hurt as bad as you do today; a time when you will laugh without feeling guilt; a time when you will again experience pleasure and look forward to each day with gratitude. Yes, there is a time ahead when you will flourish, thrive."

them when we're ready. I chose to read everything and understood what she was warning against. For those whose soul wounds are fresh, I urge you to trust your gut and censor yourself to skip the chapters that may be painful to read at your particular position in your grief journey. This book is so incredibly well-rounded and all-encompassing that you will find chapters that seem specifically written for you and your pain, and I am certain you will find healing in whatever sections you choose to read. LaRita's words touched me, inspired me, and, validated my feelings and the life that Ian lived.

In the chapter titled "Is Suicide a Choice," Archibald eloquently shares what she

knows of the suicidal mind and helps her readers to release themselves from the guilt and blame so often associated with this tragic loss. I have struggled with the concept of "choice" since Ian's death. This chapter allowed me to see Ian's last act as the most difficult choice he ever made, one that was made out of desperation and a desire to stop extreme despair, rather than that of a choice to leave this world and me. For that realization, I will forever be grateful to Mrs. Archibald.

The section titled "Victim ~ Survivor ~ Thriver" spoke straight to my heart. I read it and remembered my fresh pain—the intense wish to someday be able to go three minutes without crying or physically aching, the desire to one day live a fulfilling life and even, dare I say it, feel happiness again. LaRita chronologically outlines the progression from being a victim of suicide, to being a survivor of suicide and eventually becoming a thriving human once again. While I am in no way "over" my loss—and will never be—I saw my own journey in this chapter.

I attended my first TAPS Suicide Survivor Seminar nearly two years ago, and was most definitely a victim. Through intense counseling, an incredible support system, lots of soul searching, and an unending outpouring of support from the TAPS family, I wound up as a survivor—breathing, laughing, working, and living. Now, after having survived two years without my Ian, I can say that I am thriving.

Finding Peace Without All the Pieces has helped me to patch up some holes in my

heart that needed attention, but more importantly, it helped me to recognize and validate the victory of living after such tragic loss. I am certain LaRita's words will touch and inspire those who read them, as they have me. On one of her last pages, LaRita offers the following promise to those aching from the pain of suicide loss. I believe it sums up her entire message and the heartfelt, honest beauty found in her book: "Believe it, my wounded friend. There will be a time when you won't hurt as bad as you do today; a time when you will laugh without feeling guilt; a time when you will again experience pleasure and look forward to each day with gratitude. Yes, there is a time ahead when you will flourish, thrive." *



Rebecca Morrison



Kim Ruocco and Bonnie Carroll

TAPS National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar

By Rebecca Morrison

LaRita Archibald, along with many other subject matter experts, often serves as a presenter at the National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar (NMSSS). Last year the NMSSS was held in picturesque Colorado Springs, Colorado. More than 500 surviving family members who had lost a military loved one to suicide joined together to find hope, healing, purpose, and meaning after their loss.

At NMSSS, TAPS offers educational, therapeutic, and healing sessions for the adult survivors. The sessions range from art therapy, music, and journaling, to lectures and presentations. For the young survivors, TAPS offers the highly acclaimed Good Grief Camp. At the camp, children who have lost a loved one to suicide are paired with an active-duty military member. They spend the weekend doing age-appropriate grief work, going to offsite adventures, and most importantly connecting with their peers.

For many survivors, adults and children, the NMSSS serves as the only time that they are able to be with others who truly understand their unique and complicated pain. Speaking personally, I look forward to this seminar each year. It may seem odd to say that I look forward to spending a weekend surrounded by people bereaved by suicide, but it truly is the TAPS paradox. Several of my close suicide survivor friends and I often say that we wish we never met each other, but we are so very glad we did. I know this is the reason that the NMSSS is so powerful and healing. We spend the entire weekend engulfed in love, care, and complete acceptance. As of yet, I have not found another place where this unique breed of support exists.

I highly recommend that anyone grieving the suicide loss of a military member consider attending the NMSSS next October in Florida. For more information, check the TAPS website calendar of events later in the year.



National Military Suicide Survivor Seminar



Military Survivor Education Support Services

Working to connect families to state and federal benefits, as well as private scholarships, to help offset the costs of tuition.



One of the most exciting times in anyone's life is the prospect of attending college, secondary education, or trade school. It can also be an emotional and financially difficult time, dealing with complicated student admissions processes, applying for student aid, and dealing with everything else that goes along with this effort. The reality is that college is expensive, and knowing where to look for financial assistance is time consuming and difficult. This is especially true for those who are attempting to secure funding while grieving the loss of a loved one.

One goal at TAPS is to make every effort to ensure that surviving military dependents are not put in a position to pay for school out of pocket or through loans. Instead, we work to connect families to state and federal benefits, as well as private scholarships, to help offset the costs of tuition.

In order to accomplish this goal, TAPS is partnering with IntelliDyne, one of our long-time TAPS supporters, to build an online portal that will be a one-stop shop for education benefits for surviving military family members. While there is more to come in the near future about this exciting new tool, TAPS Casework and Education Support Services staff want to inform you now of some of the many benefits and scholarships that are currently available to survivors.

At this time, there are two primary federal benefits to assist in paying college tuition for children and spouses of the fallen. These are the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship (also known as Chapter 33) and the Survivors and Dependents' Education Assistance (DEA) Program (Chapter 35).

The Fry Scholarship pays the equivalent of the maximum in-state tuition at any school—state or private—for eligible children of those who died in the line of duty. In addition to tuition, children receive an allowance of up to \$1,000 a year for books. They also receive a monthly living stipend equivalent to the salary of an E-5 with dependents in the zip code of the school.

The DEA Program pays \$1,003 a month towards the cost of education (tuition, fees, books, and room and board) paid directly to the student to be used at any school. This benefit is for all surviving spouses and surviving children who are not eligible for the Fry Scholarship. Qualifying students are eligible for 45 months of benefits, and children are eligible until the age of 26, while spouses have 20 years of eligibility from the date of their loved one's death. Surviving children can opt to use this benefit instead of the Fry Scholarship if they so choose.


Students who are eligible for the Fry Scholarship may also use the DEA Program after they run out of Fry Scholarship benefits. Effective October 1, 2013, students can receive a maximum of 48 months of education benefits between the two programs (36 months of benefits for Fry and 12 months of benefits for DEA). Should you or your student have questions about one or both benefits, please contact our TAPS Education Support Services staff for more information.

In addition to the two federal programs, as of January 1, 2014, there are 44 states that offer either a scholarship or tuition waiver to children (and in some states, spouses) of the fallen. These benefits are often overlooked by those who reside in participating states. Considering that some of these benefits are extremely



inclusive—and in some instances are better than the federal benefits available—TAPS Education Support Services staff welcome the opportunity to share more with you about the potential benefits in your state if you are interested. TAPS can also research the possibility of being eligible in more than one state, given that some states offer eligibility based on the home state of record for the fallen service member.


Sometimes federal and state benefits are not enough to cover tuition costs, and that is why there are a number of private scholarship funds also available. While there are hundreds of scholarships with eligibility for our survivors, TAPS has identified a few of the scholarships that have historically impacted our survivors in a positive way and have been well received by those who have utilized them:



CHILDREN OF FALLEN PATRIOTS FOUNDATION

Website: www.fallenpatriots.org


Eligibility: Children of a service member who died in the line of duty and who are Fry-eligible. The foundation pays out the difference in education costs after all other benefits are accounted for. It makes payments directly to the institution, but also will pay off any student loans that a student may accrue during undergraduate education.



CHILDREN OF FALLEN SOLDIERS RELIEF FUND

Website: www.cfsrf.org

Eligibility: Children and spouses of an active duty service member who died, regardless of the cause. The fund pays out directly to the institution, and grants are dependent on the survivor's level of need.



FISHER HOUSE

Website: www.fisherhouse.org

Eligibility: Fisher House offers a variety of scholarships for military families, some specific for children of those who died in the line of duty, some specific for military spouses and surviving spouses, and some for surviving children of those who died on active duty or while receiving retiree pay, regardless of the cause.



MATTHEW FREEMAN PROJECT

Website: www.freemanproject.org

Eligibility: Siblings of a fallen military member who was killed while deployed to a combat zone. Must be entering or attending an accredited university or college of choice and must show proof of acceptance.

The Matthew Freeman Project is the only scholarship organization dedicated specifically to siblings of the fallen.



MILITARY SURVIVOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

Helping military family survivors access educational benefits is just one of the things TAPS Education Support Services does for surviving military families. In addition to creating the portal described on the preceding page, TAPS Education Support Services is currently working on the following to help maximize academic success:

- ◆ Addressing the educational needs of surviving families preemptively.
- ◆ Working to make the process of applying for Fry Scholarships and DEA Scholarships simpler.
- ◆ Adding workshop sessions on education benefits at select TAPS regional and national seminars.
- ◆ Contacting federal, state, and private benefits on behalf of TAPS families.
- ◆ Offering guidance and advice on education benefits to tailor the options to each family's needs and circumstances.
- ◆ Working with Student Veterans of America (SVA) chapters all over the country so that survivors attending institutions with SVA chapters have peer support on campus.

Since 1994, TAPS has been supporting families of the fallen, and the development of the Education Support Services program is an expansion of that support. We are here to answer all education benefits questions, and assist in any way we can with the post-secondary education process. *

For more information, write to education@taps.org or call the TAPS helpline at 1-800-959-TAPS(8277).

Oshkosh Defense: A Celebrated Partnership

Oshkosh Defense, America's leading provider of tactical wheeled vehicles for our armed forces, has generously supported TAPS national programs for three consecutive years and has supported the TAPS Honor Guard Gala as a Presenting Sponsor. This past year, Oshkosh Defense hosted a highly successful TAPS Regional Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp in Wisconsin, with more than 125 adult and children survivors attending from five different states.

"We're honored to come to work every day to support our nation's heroes with the most advanced military vehicles in the world, and our ties to the military run even deeper than the trucks we build," said John Urias, Executive Vice President of Oshkosh Corporation and President of Oshkosh Defense. "Many of us at Oshkosh, including myself, are retired or reserve military members, or have loved ones who are serving. Supporting TAPS' mission of providing assistance and comfort to the families of our fallen military heroes is a source of great pride for every one of us."

Oshkosh has a long-standing history of charitable giving and support for programs that assist members of the armed forces and their families, both in the field and when they return home. The leadership of Oshkosh fully embodies the spirit and intent of this patriotic tradition. Both by personal example and through exemplary leadership, Oshkosh has been at the forefront of supporting our nation's military and their families.



Oshkosh CEO Charles L. Szews and Oshkosh Defense President John Urias present check to TAPS Founder and President Bonnie Carroll

Photos courtesy of Oshkosh Defense

We at TAPS are especially blessed with their far-reaching support through employee volunteer programs, extensive charitable giving, and invaluable partnering opportunities.

Oshkosh's charitable contributions to TAPS have exceeded \$450,000 with a portion directed for an annual TAPS Regional Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp held in Wisconsin. This year's program will be held in August and is expected to be another resounding success with an even larger participation of survivors throughout the region.

Oshkosh has set a goal of engaging more of its employees in their company-sponsored volunteer programs. This has been especially

true in their volunteer support of TAPS, both with programs and fundraising. Oshkosh employees took a very active role in helping coordinate the survivor seminar and camp activities, and they turned out in force as volunteers for the entire weekend.

One of the most successful and creative fundraising campaigns, Supporting the Families of America's Fallen Heroes, has raised more than \$200,000 for TAPS. This interactive nationwide campaign, managed by the Oshkosh marketing team, engages individuals through Facebook and signup boards to express their support of TAPS. In turn, Oshkosh donates \$2 for every Facebook "Like" or signature on event campaign boards.

Oshkosh Defense defines the very essence of a corporate/nonprofit partnership. Not only have they directly supported TAPS in many important ways, but they have opened doors for event opportunities with the Washington Redskins, the Green Bay Packers, and the Adopt a Military Family holiday gift giving program.

We are so very grateful to the entire Oshkosh team and extend a special salute to Charles Szews, Oshkosh Corporation Chief Executive Officer; John Urias, President of Oshkosh Defense; and Jay Kimmitt, Executive Vice President of Government Operations. Thank you! ★



Supporting the Families of America's Fallen Heroes campaign board

*2013 Wisconsin
Survivor Seminar and
Good Grief Camp*

Thank You to Our Donors & Sponsors

We are grateful to the Friends of TAPS whose personal gifts, memorial tributes, grants, event sponsorships, and planned gifts enable TAPS to comfort and care for the loved ones of those who served and died.

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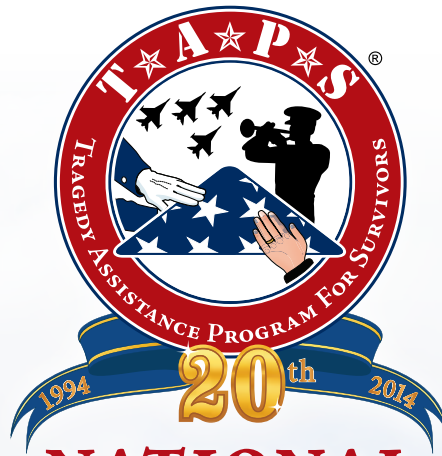


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★ MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND ★

May 23 to 26, 2014
Washington, DC



Photos, TAPS Archives

It's not too late! Register today!