

A salute to Lynne and Bo Cottrell for 2008's T.A.P.S. event

REMARKS



BY MORT MARKS

Our military honor guards perform dignified funerals with 21-gun salutes, missing man formations, precise folding of flags and the mournful sound of *Taps* echoes across rows of white headstones, but after the flag has been presented and the funeral ceremony is over, who is there to pick up the pieces of the shattered lives of the surviving family?

Although there are many veterans' groups that provide for servicemen wounded in battle, until the T.A.P.S. organization was formed, there was nothing to really serve the families faced with the loss of a loved one while serving in the military.

For this reason T.A.P.S. - "Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors" - was founded by Connie Carroll to help provide surviving families with programs that would help them cope and heal in the aftermath of their loss. Programs that help them heal by providing them with comfort, peer support, information and specialized resources.

Since the average military casualty case is closed soon after the soldier's death, the surviving families often remain in a state of shock and denial for months after the death, but T.A.P.S. has loving caring peer mentors and caseworkers who work closely with government agencies to assist in solving problems for grieving members long after the official casualty file is closed.

Last year and again this year, Bo and Lynne Cottrell devoted many, many months of their time and efforts to direct three important events - first on June 20, they organized "The Songwriter's Show" hosted by Gary Morris, renowned singer and songwriter, and starred some of the best songwriters from Nashville.

The next morning, Bo and

Lynne had a two-day Gary Morris celebrity golf tournament that started this year on June 21 at Arrowhead Country Club and continued Sunday morning at the U.S. Air Force Academy Eisenhower Golf Course.

And, if that weren't enough, on Saturday night Bo and Lynne had organized another event for T.A.P.S. This one was titled "Saturday Night Dinner and Concert," which again featured Gary Morris, and included music by the Jim Hyatt Band, The Lawmen and musician, singer comedian Gary Deer.

Last year's events were so successful that last August T.A.P.S. was able to finance Colorado's first "Survivor Seminar and Grief Camp for Young Survivors" and funded another one this past spring at Fort Carson, and possibly a second one later this summer. These Survivor Seminars and Good Grief Camps are designed to help rebuild shattered lives and give survivors the chance to help each other heal.

Although this year's total receipts are not yet known, the turnout for the three events was even larger than last year's, and was a resounding entertaining success and undoubtedly will also prove to be a

financial one for T.A.P.S.

Major General Mark Graham, commander of Division West and Ft. Carson, was Saturday night's principal speaker, and having lost two sons, one to depression and one to combat, pointed out how personally he knew how important T.A.P.S. work is to the bereaved.

Bo and Lynne - we, in Colorado can only thank you for your work on T.A.P.S. and can only hope you continue your endeavors for this organization, because as General Graham concluded his speech, he said "I want to especially thank T.A.P.S. for all they do every single day to help all the Gold Star Families of our nation. This is such an amazing organization."

Let us all remember Archibald McLeish's words engraved at the Memorial of those fallen heroes of the "global war on terrorism" at Fort Riley, Kan., "We leave you our deaths: give them an end to the war and a true peace: give them a victory that ends the war and afterwards: give them their meaning. We were young they say. We have died. Remember us."

Let us all remember that we remain, "the land of the free because of the brave."