

love lives on

The Stories Behind the Music



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In Tribute to Brigadier General Thomas Carroll, USA

Written by Bonnie Carroll, surviving spouse
with Richie McDonald, Frank Myers & Jimmy Nichols

Recorded by Lonestar, Vince Gill and Friends

*"We shared five years together and that wasn't long enough
But I swear they were the best years of my life
And on the days your memory is tearing at my heart
You always find a way to let me know we're not apart"*



Brig. Gen. Thomas C. Carroll, a lifelong Alaskan and commander of the Alaska Army National Guard, lost his life at age 44 when his National Guard plane crashed on the Chilkat Peninsula en route to Juneau with seven other soldiers on board. He left behind his wife, Bonnie Carroll, who found no support to help address her heart wrenching grief. She struggled to help the other families who lost their military heroes in that crash.

How Tom lived—and died—changed Bonnie forever. How she responded would change the lives of hundreds of thousands of others.

Bonnie founded the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), so no one would ever walk alone after the death of a military loved one. On Tom's headstone in Alaska, Bonnie inscribed *Love Lives On*. In the 26 years since Bonnie founded TAPS, over 95,000 military survivors have received comfort, care and critical resources. For her work on behalf of this community, Bonnie received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015.

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Climb to Glory

In Tribute to Sergeant Eddie Hernandez, USA

Written by CPT John Rhoten, USA, surviving Battle Buddy to Many Soldiers
with Brett Jones and Eddy Raven

Recorded by Billy Ray Cyrus, Eddy Raven and Mark Plummer

*"I'm one of those lucky ones
I made it home in one piece
Some of my buddies who had my back
weren't as lucky as me
Ain't a day goes by I don't think bout them boys"*



CPT John Rhoten is an intelligence officer in the U.S. Army. He currently serves as an officer in the 25th Infantry Division G2, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. He has deployed twice to Iraq and twice to Afghanistan. Since 2011, CPT Rhoten has volunteered as a Military Mentor in TAPS Good Grief Camp, touching the lives of many children who have lost a military loved one. He serves to honor his fellow soldiers who did not return from battle. CPT Rhoten recalls, "We lived day to day. As an Infantryman you live on the edge never knowing how far you will go in life because you signed up to lay your life on the line for your country and for your brothers."

John dedicated this song to his friend, Sergeant Edelman (Eddie) Hernandez. SGT Hernandez lost his life in Afghanistan in 2007 after clearing a village from which SGT Hernandez's unit took fire. He lost his footing while trying to find a spot for his Platoon to safely cross the Korengal River. SGT Hernandez was swept downstream by the swift moving current. An extensive search and rescue was launched but he was not found and recovered until the following day.

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You Carry Me Too

In Tribute to Lieutenant Florence Choe, USN

Written by Dr. Jay Choe, USN, surviving spouse
with Marv Green, Angie Keilhauer and Wood Newton

Recorded by Angie Keilhauer

*"When you run, I see so much of her in you
The way you lean into the pain
Keep pushing yourself through"*



LT Florence Bacong Choe, 35, was killed March 27, 2009, in northern Afghanistan when an insurgent, posing as an Afghan National Army soldier, opened fire as Lt. Choe jogged along the perimeter fence at the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan at Camp Shaheen, Mazar-e-Sharif. Lt Choe was serving as a medical administration and logistics mentor to the Afghan National Army. She had volunteered for the assignment. Dr. Jay Choe was in San Diego with their daughter, Kristin, when he received the news. He was in the midst of his surgical residency having attended the Naval Academy and Tulane Medical School.

"That was the darkest time of my life," Dr. Choe recalls.

"My daughter who was at the tender age of three at the time, unbeknownst to her, was my savior and my light. Kristin gave me the strength to carry on." Today, as Dr. Choe and Kristin jog together in their neighborhood in San Diego, he marvels at the similarities between Kristin and Florence despite her limited memories of her mother.

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Press On Preston

In Tribute to PFC Preston Brown, USA

Written by Stephanie Greene, Shandrea Houser and Clarence Houser, Jr., surviving mother, sister and brother
with Greg Barnhill & Deborah Allen

Recorded by Deborah Allen

*"It was so unexpected the way you were taken
We were not prepared for how deeply we'd be shaken
See it was all so sudden, so out of the blue
We cried and we prayed, Lord please don't let it be true"*



PFC Preston Brown loved basketball. While deployed to Iraq in 2001, he would spend all his extra time playing the sport he loved. On January 15, 2012, he had been home in El Paso, Texas, for a few weeks. PFC Brown skipped his usual basketball game and met two friends who he was concerned about. Brown was killed by a stray bullet when he and his friends were caught in the crossfire of a gunfight that erupted in a parking lot.

Others in his unit recalled, "When you get off the plane, you breathe a sigh of relief that you brought all your soldiers home safe. Then to lose one of them while on block leave, it's one of the worst feelings ever." Following Preston's death, five lives were changed when the family donated one of his lungs, his liver, kidneys, and heart to critically ill strangers. In 2014, his family had the pleasure of meeting Preston's heart recipient in Texas; forever bonded by their connection to Preston.

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Isn't It Amazing

In Tribute to Major Ian Brinkley, USMC

Written by Dawn Brinkley, surviving spouse
with Billy Montana and Keni Thomas

Recorded by All-4-One

*"You Always Promised That Your Wings
Would Never Let Me Down
As Far As I Have Fallen, I Have Never Hit The Ground"*



Ian C. Brinkley, "Moto," was a Major in the United States Marine Corps when he succumbed to cancer at just 42 years of age.

Moto, (which was his call sign, also known as, Master of the Obvious) earned a full-ride athletic/academic scholarship to attend Catawba College in Salisbury, NC. Major Brinkley was commissioned as an officer in the United States Marine Corps in 1997 and reported to Pensacola, FL where he earned his Naval Aviator wings and graduated top in his class. An instructor pilot at HMT/303, Major Brinkley was called to serve when GUN SHOT 66 went down in November 2005. He also served several tours in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Major Brinkley's service was commended many times over. He was recognized with the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal Strike/Flight (6 times), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Navy Unit Commendation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, NATO Medal-ISAF Afghanistan and Certificate of Commendation.

He is survived by his widow, Dawn Brinkley and their two sons, Marcus and Gavin.

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K9 Brother

In Tribute to Sgt Joshua Ashley, USMC

**Written by Tammie and Jordan Ashley, surviving mother and brother
with Greg Friia and Wood Newton**

Recorded by Andy Griggs

"On night patrol that fateful day
They came to a stream along the way
Josh picked up his best friend and threw him across
Just a few steps later one life was saved one life was lost"

Josh Ashley was described as a "Lion of a Man, Brother Soldier, and a Dog's Best Friend." One of his mother's three sons. Big muscles, big heart, big ambition to give back to the country he felt born to defend. Sergeant Ashley wasn't on the front lines in Afghanistan--he was in front of the front lines with his German shepherd, Sirius, clearing the IEDs for the special forces to follow, leading the way with 80 pounds of dog food on his back. Today, Josh's mother cares for Sirius--the explosive that killed her son left his canine partner traumatized.



Sgt. Joshua Ashley grew up in Rancho Cucamonga, CA. His dream was to become a police officer; he joined the Marines immediately following his graduation from high school. Joshua became a Military Police Officer and later an official K9 handler. He and his canine partner, Sirius, were assigned to Special Forces MARSOC in Afghanistan. The evening of Josh's death, he and Sirius led a patrol in an explosive battleground where Josh gave his life when he was killed by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). The lives of many soldiers were spared, including Sirius.

Recognized posthumously for his bravery and heroism, Joshua received a number of medals and awards including a Bronze Star, Purple Heart, "Marine of The Year" and "The Jim Kallstrom Award." Joshua is survived by his mother and father (Tammie and Jon), his brothers (Jon and Jordan) and his K9 partner, Sirius, who was adopted by his family and lives in California. "For me, being able to adopt Sirius is like having Josh with me," said Tammie Ashley.

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People Need to Know

In Tribute to Specialist Wyatt Martin, USA

**Written by Brian and Beth Martin, surviving father and sister
with Larry Gatlin and Paul Overstreet**

Recorded by The Gatlin Brothers and Paul Overstreet

"You might believe that freedom just comes free
But that ain't the way the world goes
People need to know"



United States Army Specialist Wyatt Martin was a combat engineer who cleared the routes so his fellow soldier would have safe passage; who joined the military because his life and his family were so perfect that he had to give back after the Twin Towers fell. Until an 800-pound bomb was detonated next to his truck.

Wyatt was a native of Mesa, Arizona. He entered the United States Army in August 2012 and was assigned to 2nd Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, TX. In June 2013, Wyatt joined the combat engineers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood and later deployed to Afghanistan with his unit. While supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, SPC Martin's vehicle was hit with an improvised explosive device; Wyatt and a fellow soldier were killed.

Wyatt is survived by his parents (Brian and Julie) and two sisters (Katie and Beth). Hunting and fishing were Wyatt's greatest passions; his ambition was to become a Wildlife Officer. He is remembered by family and friends as a young man with "a bigger than life" personality, character and charm. He told his parents, "If something happens to me, know that I went happy."

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New Set of Wings

In Tribute to Colonel David Banholzer, USAF

Written by Alison, Katherine and
Caroline Banholzer, surviving spouse and daughters
with Pam Tillis, Dean Sams and Rob Crosby

Recorded by Pam Tillis

*"I can't begrudge you your new set of wings
Though the hurt is so hard and the truth is so mean
But my love for you like the sky never ends
And we'll fly together again - With a new set of wings"*

Colonel David D. Banholzer was the 14th Presidential Pilot of the United States; he also served as Commander of the Presidential Airlift Group stationed at Joint Base Andrews, MD. At home, he took his young daughters "around the world" by drawing airports for them on butcher paper in the living room ...until a rare brain cancer took his life.



Col. Banholzer earned his commission from the Air Force ROTC program at the University of Wisconsin and entered active duty in December 1992. He served in a variety of roles in the Air Force Air Mobility Command with a diverse operations background in Strategic Airlift, Air Refueling and VIP Special Air Missions. He was a Command Pilot with worldwide flight experience in the VC-25, C-32, C-5 and KC-135 aircraft.

He graduated with distinction from The Naval War College in Newport, RI and Squadron Officer School at Maxwell AFB, AL. Colonel Banholzer also held a Master of Arts Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies and a Master of Arts Degree in Management. David was recognized with the "Colonel Joseph B. Duckworth Award," presented to the USAF unit or individual who has made the most significant contribution to the art and science of instrument flying.

While serving active duty, Col. Banholzer lost his battle and succumbed to Glioblastoma Multiforme.

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Joshua 1:9

In Tribute to Private First Class Joshua Islam, USMC

Written by James and Donna Islam, surviving parents
with Phil O'Donnell and Buddy Owens

Recorded by Dave Fenley

*"He Was Swinging For The Moon
A Warrior's Heart From Day One
Fearless Like His Fathers Son"*



Joshua Islam, a native of Gainesville, Florida, died in a training accident at Camp Pendleton, CA. The nineteen-year-old, who readied for boot camp as a high school senior, was an honor student and accomplished athlete; he was a pitcher and outfielder for the state championship Weddington Warriors baseball team. Joshua was a runner-up for company Iron Man at boot camp and a top marksman at the USMC School of Infantry. Joshua was fearless, skilled with a fishing rod, a surprisingly good cook and determined to be the best of the best.

Preparing to become a member of the elite Marine Corps Reconnaissance Force, Joshua lost his life. He wore a dog tag inscribed with the Bible verse given to him at birth that read "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. God is with you." (Joshua 1:9)

Joshua comes from a big family of community servants, sports fans and American Patriots. He is survived by his mother and father (Donna and James), his three brothers (Jarrett, Levi and Devin), and three sisters (Shannon, Victoria and Abigail).

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Rebel Wings

In Tribute to Sgt Nicholas Pansini, USMC

Written by Joe, Angel and Shannon Pansini, surviving father and sisters
with Danny Wells, Liz Hengber and Gary Baker

Recorded by John Rich

*"Some wars ain't fought in battle
Some wars you fight at home
Too proud to show you're fragile
You faced your demons on your own"*



Inspired by the events of 9/11, Nick Pansini joined the Marine Corps shortly after graduation from Heritage High School in Littleton, CO. In 2006, he entered boot camp at MCRD San Diego. Following training, Nick was assigned to 5th Anglico as an 0861 (fire support). Less than three years later, Nick was promoted to Sergeant.

During his four short years of service he was stationed in Okinawa, Japan and deployed to Iraq twice. Sgt. Pansini was Honorably Discharged in January 2010.

He had enrolled in classes as part of his journey to become a firefighter but took his own life just six-and-a-half months later. His mother described Nick's death, he "died at war in the hallway of his home."

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Roots & American Music Society (RAMS), a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization and record label based in Memphis, TN, teamed with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) to orchestrate and create a meaningful recording project titled LOVE LIVES ON. The compilation spotlights 10 original and personal songs that honor the lives and dedication of our servicemen and women, and the sacrifice of fallen military heroes. All proceeds from the Album will benefit TAPS and the military families they support.



About Roots & American Music Society (RAMS):

Roots & American Music Society is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization and non-profit record label. Founded in Memphis, Tennessee in 2015, RAMS exists with the goal to foster and support the creation, performance and appreciation of Roots and American music. RAMS' nonprofit record label undertakes unique large-scale recording projects that use music to raise awareness of and funding for important work being done in our communities. For more information about RAMS, visit www.ramusicssociety.org.



About TAPS:

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is the leading national non-profit organization providing compassionate care and survivor support services for the families of America's fallen military heroes. TAPS provides peer-based emotional support, grief and trauma resources, grief seminars for adults, Good Grief Camps for children, case work assistance, connections to community-based care, and a 24/7 resource and information helpline for all who have been affected by a military death. Services are provided free of charge. Since 1994, TAPS has offered support to more than 95,000 survivors of fallen military. For more information about TAPS, visit TAPS.org.

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