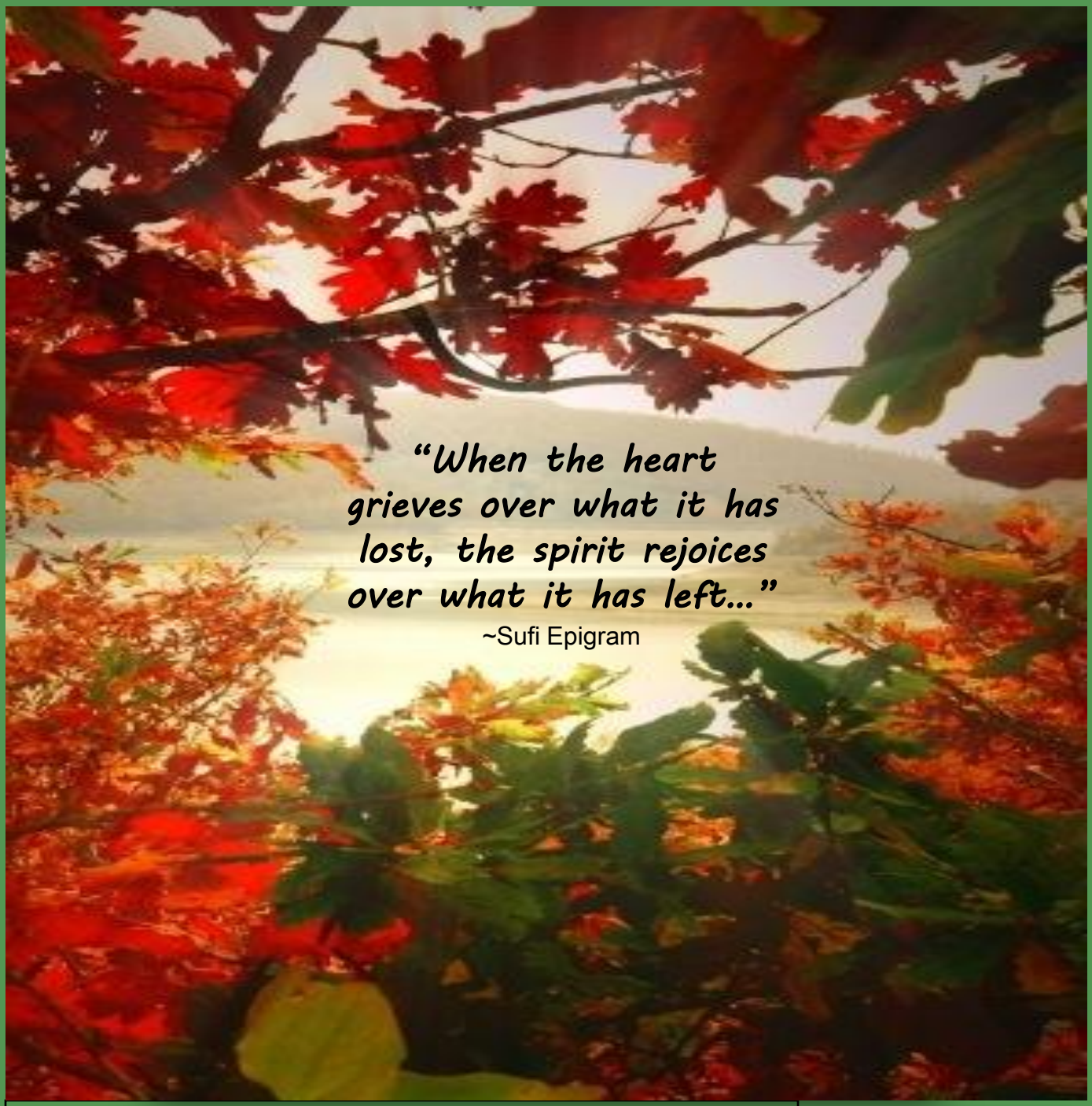
Fall 2012 Newsletter

Fall 2012, Issue 9

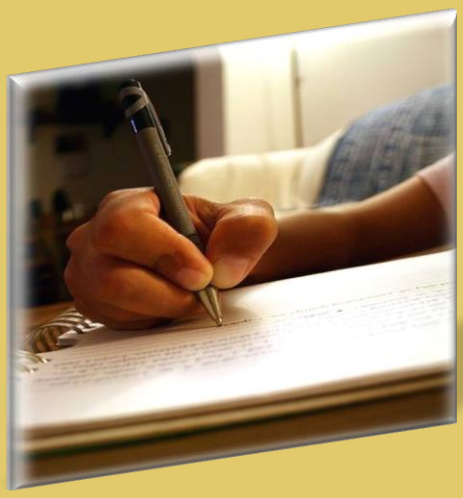
Topic: "Hear Our Hearts"



Air Force Families Forever

"Ensuring that the families of our fallen Airmen are never forgotten by providing immediate and long-term compassionate support."

Please know that we are not attempting to endorse any company, service or product, nor are we attempting to impose any beliefs on you. We are simply giving you options to explore as you desire.



Focused Expressive Writing

by
Christine Jette

http://www.thegrievingheart.info/few.html#target2

Nothing prepares us for the death of a loved one. Even if the death is anticipated, it will still jolt our foundation. Grief throws us into emotional turmoil. Most grievers do not seek professional help for six to nine months after the death of a loved one, if at all. Friends cannot always give us the comfort we need. What can we do with all the feelings churning inside?

Focused Expressive Writing (FEW) is an inexpensive, effective way to cope with the strong emotions of grief. We can write down whatever is on our minds and in our hearts: everything from snatches of memory to accounts of daily grief and confusion.

FEW helps us sort out and identify what is happening to us. It also puts our thoughts and feelings in a safe place that we can go back to if we want. Writing down our personal experience of grief relieves us of the need to carry it around in our heads every minute of every day.

But focused expressive writing doesn't have to be all about pain. We can also write about stories from the life of the loved one in recent times or long ago: tender moments, funny incidents, favorite jokes, or anecdotes that enrich us as we remember the one who is gone. Many friends will believe, in error, that it is kinder to never speak of the dead. This is all the more reason for us to write into being a dear life that has ended.

Focused expressive writing is safe and inexpensive. All it takes is pen, paper and 20 – 30 minutes at least four times a week (*). You can buy a beautiful blank book if you want, but you need not spend a lot of money on your journal. A three-ring notebook, writing tablet or file folder with sheets of paper is adequate.

Forget about spelling, grammar or anyone else reading it. FEW is private. The challenge comes from summoning the will to protect your writing time from every day distractions. Turn off your cell phone and instant messaging! This time belongs to you and is important for your healing.

Focused expressive writing is not the same as keeping a diary. A diary is a chronicle of your everyday life: what you did, thought or observed today. There is a random quality to diary entries because the writing usually meanders through the day and lacks a particular focus.

FEW is a specific type of writing for insight and comfort, done at regular intervals. You choose an event, thought, feeling or concern related to your loss and make it the first sentence at the top of the page. You spend the rest of your writing time expanding on the first sentence in whatever form it takes.

(*) For me, FEW works best with pen and paper. Word processors are impersonal machines. The act of writing is more intimate when my hand guides a pen across paper in my own script, but this is my experience of FEW. Since writing about the death of a loved one is personal, please use the method that offers you the most comfort.

Learning to Breathe Without Ryan

by

Marianne Vicente

Life is a journey of experiences. Experiences are essentially lessons. From the moment we are born, the lessons of life begin. The very first lesson learned is how to breathe. It is a lesson that stays with us throughout the rest of our life. You have to breathe to live.

During my early stages of grief, I had to learn that lesson all over again. I had to learn how to breathe even though I felt as though I was suffocating. I had to learn how to breathe even though I felt as though I was drowning in my tears. I had to learn how to breathe even though I felt as though my heart had been ripped into pieces. I had to learn how to breathe even though my world had fallen to pieces and the future seemed bleak.

I have learned that even though the thought of "how do I go on?" continued to echo in my mind, my body's survival instinct took over and I continued to inhale and exhale.

I have learned that in the early stages of grief, I had to just survive. I had to relearn everything in life all over again that we experience as a toddler. I learned how to crawl and take baby steps.

I was a weak newborn all over again in a world that was unfamiliar to me. I had been accustomed to the comfort and connection I had with my beloved – just as a fetus is protected and cared for in its mother's womb.

But then life suddenly and unexpectedly cut me from my life support and like a baby, I had to learn how to survive.

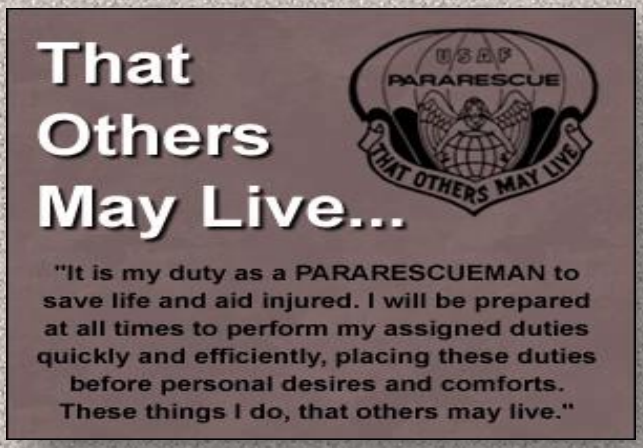
I learned that there are many faces of grief and that it can hit you unexpectedly anytime and anywhere.

Grief happens when you lose someone you love.
Grief is when you turn into a zombie...wandering the earth aimlessly...functioning yet ***LIFELESS***.
Grief is when your brain registers and comprehends... yet it doesn't.
Grief makes the most simple and menial tasks seem overwhelming and it takes every ounce of effort in your body to complete... or incomplete...
Grief is when things go in one ear and out the other...
Grief is when you're having a conversation with someone and then your mind wanders off in the middle of it...
Grief is when you stare at someone dumbfounded because suddenly, they seem to be speaking a foreign language...
Grief is when you drown your sorrows in anything and everything...
Grief is when you can still laugh and smile at the surface while inside you're drowning from your tears...
Grief is when you're slowly losing your sanity...
Grief is like hell on earth...

I have experienced moments when grief has knocked me to my knees and I felt as though I'd literally drowned in my own tears and there was no escape from the sorrow of having lost my other half. But I learned that when grief knocks you to your knees, you're in a great position to pray. And so I pray for relief. And it eventually comes and I can rise again.

I have learned that many have walked down this journey before me and I have learned to hold their hand. I have learned to take the hands of those who are new to this journey and share our tears and strength.
And I have learned that grief is truly something you learn to live with and not something you can get over. I have learned how to use my grief as strength to help others in this journey. I have learned that although I get lonely **I'm not alone.**

My letter to Joel
By
Judy Gentz



Dear Joel,

I cannot believe I am writing this letter. Never would I have imagined 28 years ago when you came into this world, that I would say goodbye in a letter, because I had lost you. The last two years have been surrealistic in ways I cannot expect you to understand. Since you were not a Dad yet, I imagine you wondering why this is such a struggle. What I can say is that everyday I wake with a hole in my heart where your energy used to be. I have such wonderful memories, and really no regrets for the many awesome experiences we've shared. But there's a yearning for your presence in my being that is indescribable. I know other GSM's understand this void. I have tried to remain positive in my life and behavior to benefit your memory...I know you would want that. Hence my involvement in Team RWB, staying in touch with the AF and your friends, sending care packages to your PJ and para rescue brothers.

All of the busy-ness, contacts, activities, etc. do not make up for what I miss most. That being your voice, and those tight strong hugs... Air Force hugs as I called them. Your positive attitude is such an inspiration to others, and I miss your cheer leading! I miss your beautiful smile. I miss your questions about cooking, sewing and other funny things. I miss hearing about your adventures. I miss the hope and dream of backpacking together along the Appalachian Trail. I miss the dream of your children... my grandchildren, whom I will never know.

I regret that I didn't talk with you more on Mother's Day when you called...I was so caught off guard I did not know what to say. I know you know how much I love and miss you. But I will say it again... I love and miss you more than simple words can say. Keep Rachel and Jared in your sight and guard sweetie. Come visit me in my dreams.

Love you,

Mom

Lonely Without Phil by *Linda Ambard*

I have been in a major tail spin for the past five days. It came to a head today and I had a hard time getting it together. The tears flowed freely and I never felt so alone and so lost as I did today. A relatively simple thing stripped what remained of the confident mask I wear. I left the lights on in my car and my car would not start this morning. A car not starting is not easy in Europe like it is in the states. Instead of calling USAA, I was stranded six miles from work without a recall roster or a phone number to get help. I felt so helpless and alone. As I strapped on the running shoes and ran to work, I wept. I wept because I am invisible, and I am pretty worthless in certain roles.

I know that when I was younger, people paid attention to me. I never really thought about it, but there was always someone to do things with and people who wanted to be with me. The last time I was single for any given time, I was under 21, but even when I was a young mom, I had no shortage of people wanting to spend time with me or do things with me. Granted, I had many running friends and I had many young church friends, but as the years went by, my circle became smaller and smaller. For a long time, my circle was Phil and the five children. Having that many children and moving as often as we did sort of precipitates the provinciality of my life. I never really saw it until Phil died. I am all alone. My children are grown up and they do not consider that it might help the loneliness to hear from them more often. It is my need, thus I will not ask. When the effort is made, though, it is balm to an aching heart.

My life was being a mom. If Phil hadn't died, I think I would have navigated the transition just fine because we liked each other and we liked spending time together. With Phil gone and my children flying through life, I stare at four walls. Time moves slower that the sands in an hourglass. I wait for what? I don't know. I wait for my life to have sparkle and to have promise, but I see none of that. I sit alone, bereft, and wanting. I want not so much to have my life back because I know that my life with my children at home was successful, but I want a life filled with promise and people needing me.

Phil and I had very established roles. It wasn't that we really were all that old fashioned, but we had five children. We chose for me to stay at home. It made sense for me to take care of the children, the house, the paperwork, etc. I was wonder mom because I was super involved in leading Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, volunteering, Red Cross, church activities, wives' clubs, and I could go on and on. I homeschooled. When I finally did go back to work, my role morphed, but Phil attended the car, the computer, and the electronics. Today, my car wouldn't start. I couldn't pick up the phone to call USAA. I don't know how to jump start my car, who to call, or what to do in relatively easy car repair situations. Same goes with setting up the computer or electronics. I have never done these things so all of it sits detached and waiting.

I look at four walls and I stare blankly into a future I never fathomed I wanted. Picking up the house chores would have been easy for Phil. I have the ability to make holidays fun--big whoopity doo. I can save lives and deal with chaos and lots of children--double whoopity doo. Normal tasks are beyond me and it makes me feel like a stupid little girl--more so when I weep. Feeling alone and helpless is not a good combination. Today, I broke; I shattered into a billion tiny shards that are free falling as iridescent tears.

Missing Justin

by

Michelle Schmidt

My name is Michelle Schmidt; my fiancé was 1LT Justin Wilkens. He was killed February 18, 2012 when his plane crashed in Africa. This journey without him has been extremely difficult and very lonely. I was always used to him being gone and never being home since he was only home for a month at a time. I would say some of the toughest experiences I have been through is jumping back into school and work, I never had time to grieve. I was back at work two weeks later and back in school not even a month later. But the reason I've been able to go on and do so well is because my schooling was Justin's pride and joy. He looked forward to celebrating with me and always cheered me on 100% even when I wanted to give up.

I miss the little things the most, every time I get a 100 on a test the first person I always called was Justin even if he was deployed,,, and now I can't. I miss sitting on the porch and watching planes fly over and pointing them out to each other. I miss our Friday night ritual going out to dinner at our favorite restaurant. I miss our mini vacations to some crazy place after every deployment. I miss listening to him over analyze everything. I miss that goofy half smile he always had but most of all I miss the fact that he could never go more than an hour without sending me a text just to tell me how much he loved me.

What I regret the most is our last full day together I went to school instead of skipping and helping him pack. If I would've known it was going to be our last day together I would of skipped and never of gone to sleep that night. We never had unresolved issues, our relationship was an open book and we were very happy. I wish I wouldn't of received my custom designed engagement right 2 months after he was killed, I wish he would have had the opportunity to see the reaction on my face and he of been able to give it to me and place it on my hand. Justin was a wonderful man and I miss him so much.

Missing Joseph's Calls

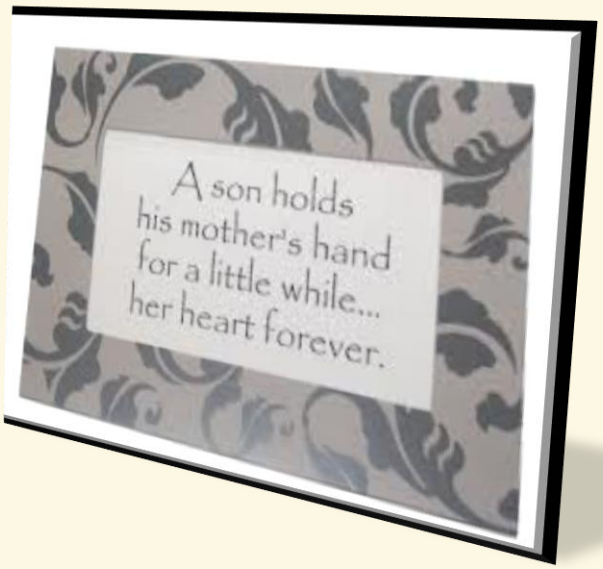
by

Mary Ellen Winston

What I miss most is hearing Joseph's voice. I had gotten used to not seeing him and to his absence from the holiday table and other events during the year, but he would call. He would call for special occasions; Christmas, birthdays, Mother's Day... Sometimes I had almost given up on him, thinking he had forgotten and then late at night he would call. Even while deployed, he would manage somehow. He would call for no reason, or because the wife told him it had been a long time since he called (love that about her). Every call, no matter where or when he called always ended the same way with "Love you Mommy." I miss hearing that!

I have no regrets. Since the time when he was 22 and I had to sit with him before his first deployment and discuss what type of funeral he may want and where to be buried, I realized that time with him was precious. I made sure to tell him the important things; how much I loved him and always would, that I trusted him to make right decisions, and how very proud I was of him. At his wedding during the mother/son dance he gave me the best gift of all. He was telling me that friends would tell him he had an inner compass that always pointed him to do the right thing. When asked where that came from he would tell them "that's all you Mom." How can I have any regrets after hearing that? If I have any regrets, it is that his life was cut short at 28 years old. But it is a waste of time and energy to regret what I could not control. Those things I could control; my relationship with my son; those things I did right.

Mary Ellen Winston
Mother of ***SSgt Joseph J. Hamski,*** *USAF*
KIA 5/26/2011



A letter to my son John

by

Dan Hughes

Hey Bud,

The Air Force Families of the Fallen support group asked us to write letters to our loved one as a sort of therapy. Well here goes.

It is 10 months since the 3 uniform officers appeared on our porch. I remember it like it was yesterday, I was home working on a plumbing problem in our sink when they knocked on the door. After putting the dog in the utility room I opened the door and I remember saying to them "this doesn't look good." While they were professional and very respectful; they opened a huge hole in our hearts. While the raw pain of that hole has eased up, the hole actually feels bigger with each passing day. I was going by Cincinnati the other day and I could remember how last October your truck broke down coming home for R&R after deployment. I remembered how excited Mom and I were as we were driving down there to get you and see you after your deployment. It hurt like hell to drive by there 10 months later. Bud, don't buy the crap that time heals all, it is just a saying to get the grieving person to shut up and take their grief somewhere else. I have also learned to hate the phrase "be strong," it means you are not allowed to grieve after a short period, move on, and get back to life. It's all crap.

The funeral and subsequent memorial was a whirl wind of activity. So many friends and family had been around to cry, laugh or just be with us. People posted comments and tributes to you on your face book page. After reading 1 ½ hours of postings, I finally got a face book page. Yes, I know you would be shocked that I finally "got with the times." It has been cool that many of your buddies have friended me or mom and it helps to stay in touch and hear stories about you. Every month or two, one of them will stop by and visit with Mom and me. They don't realize how much that means to us. They sit in the family room and tell us stories about you, some I am sure you did not want us to know, but Bud it gives us another piece of you that we did not have. Every piece, every story is worth more than gold to us. We suck up every word and imagine you in that part of the story. We can see your face again and hear your voice again in the many special things that you would say. Often the visits end with them asking to go to your room. We let them go alone and sit up there like back in your high school days. (Mom and I miss hearing you practice and play your guitar). Eventually they come down with a memento and tears in their eyes. We hug and they leave.

I have really leaned on my best friend Mark Beach and my brother Don. I also got adopted by your high school wrestling team. They took a team picture, signed and dedicated the season in your honor. They inscribed the team photo to you that you are a Flyer forever. It's funny how your high school mascot is "The Flyers" and you went on to the Air Force. It helped to be in the wrestling room and have the seniors who were in 8th grade your senior year, really take to having me there. I think they helped me more than I helped them. I plan to continue to help coach in your memory.

Uncle Don's union contributed a very nice park bench that honors you; it is next to the flag poles at the entrance to the field house. People donated money in your name to the high school wrestling team. They used that money to put up new wall mats in the new wrestling room. Coach Jackson is having a plaque installed in your memory and they re-named the annual wrestling tournament to the "John M. Hughes Memorial." It is a mix of emotions when we see these tributes to you. One of great pride, but also a reminder of what we don't have …you.

Mom, Ashley and I miss you every day. Some nights I wake up and go down to your room and sleep in your bed. The very first time I did that; I swear I was sinking deep into your mattress and pillow, smelling your smell and feeling every fiber of you. Ashley has taken several of your t-shirts or sweat shirts, while they are big on her, it does us good to see your sister wearing your things. She even wants to learn to play the guitar. Remember how she used to complain about the "noise" when you would play? Now we all miss that sound from your room. Your room is filled with boxes of the things the Air Force shipped back. We just can't get to the point of going through all of it. So for now it just sits. Your fish is keeping a watch over the boxes.

November 13 will mark the one-year anniversary of your accident. Mom, Ashley and I will take a trip to the Rock-N-Roll hall of fame. We know how much you loved old rock music, and we thought what better way to spend the day then to be around music that you loved. I have now become a very big Pink Floyd fan. I wish I had taken more interest in them when you were with us. I always knew they were a more cerebral group, but now I really appreciate the depth of their music, and now when their songs come on we always turn the radio up and enjoy it even more. At your memorial we played the song "Wish You Were Here," to mom and I this is now our song for you. I think I will ask people on face book to play that song on November 13 and think of you.
Hey one thing that has bothered us is: you got the 2010 Airman of the Year award @ Moody and never told us about it, why? We are so proud of the medals, ribbons and awards you received. I think you would just say "Dad, not a big deal, I was just doing my job." The more of the humility you showed, the more amazed I am in you. You are just one cool dude.

They asked us to write about regrets we have. I now regret that we did not take enough video with sound of you and Ashley growing up. I did find some wrestling videos from my camcorder and Mark said he would help me to get them on CD. Your fellow airman showed us a You Tube video of you singing "The House of the Rising Sun." I go to that site just to hear your voice again. I wish I had more voice recordings of you. Aaron made a great video with pictures from your face book wall and music to the song "See You on the Other Side" by Ozzie Osborne. It is another great tribute to you.

Generally I don't have any regrets about our life with you, but I regret that I did not get to see you continue your path in life. I regret that I won't get to see you achieve your dreams and aspirations. I won't get to see you find a love and get married, have children. I regret that I have inherited from you. It is not supposed to be this way Bud! I have watches and rings, and things that were supposed to go to you. I finally threw away some old mementos of mine; they didn't have any importance any more. I regret that I can't talk to you, and when all of the legal and memorial things were done and your estate was settled, there was nothing more for me to do for you. It hurts.

I love and miss you with every fiber of my being. I have lost best friends, cousins, grand parents and even my own dad. But no pain that I have experienced compares to this. This hole is so big in my heart that several months ago I almost pulled over on the side of the road to call Mark to come and rip this pain from my chest.

Well I think I need to end this letter here, it's hurting again.

Love Dad.

I Miss Everything About My Husband

by

Rachael Hill

What do I miss the most?

A few months ago a friend asked me what I missed the most about my husband. It was an interesting question and while I had a very quick answer for her, it wasn't until recently that I really started to truly think about it. It's a very thought provoking question and one that doesn't really have one definitive answer. There are so many things that I miss…

Jeff was the type of person that could command a room simply by his presence. He had a personality that would draw people to him and it would only take a few minutes of knowing him before feeling like you had been best friends for years. When engaging in conversation with him he made you feel like you were the most important person in the world at that moment in time. He had a way with people and genuinely wanted to take care of those around him.

So what do I miss about Jeff? Everything. I miss his infectious smile and that little giggle he had whenever he said something witty. I miss his crazy one-liners that always seemed to come out of nowhere, and while he laughed hysterically at himself I would just shake my head and chuckle on the inside. I miss the way he looked into my eyes when we were deep in conversation. I miss the sound of his voice calling me "Princess" or telling me that he loved me. I miss listening to him sing in the shower. I miss staring at his eyebrows wondering how they always stayed so seemingly manicured when he truly did nothing with them except pluck the unibrow. I miss having someone to be silly with.

I miss watching him with the boys. I miss watching him wrestle with them on the living room floor every day after he came home from work, and feeling his love for them fill the room. I miss his high pitched squeal that purposely got them all wound up. I miss listening to him read them stories before bed and how he could never say no when they asked for just one more. I miss seeing the pride in his eyes when watching one of them do something for the first time. I miss his sound effects when taking us on family 4-wheeling or snow-machine rides. I miss how he would run through the hallways with that loud, fake laugh as the boys chased him during Nerf gun wars. I miss the confidence in knowing they would learn so many great things from him as they grew older.

I miss having someone to sit on the couch and watch TV with after putting the kids to bed, even though the channel surfing usually ended on *his* favorite channel - the Outdoor Network. I miss having someone hold my hand while walking down the street or riding in the car. I miss the way he hugged me and I melted into his arms whenever I was having a difficult day. I miss the security, knowing that he would always take care of me no matter what challenge life threw at us. I miss the banter back and forth and how I would get so frustrated because his wit was always much quicker than mine, and he always ended up with the last word. I miss the way he would come up behind me, wrap his arms around me and peek in on whatever I was cooking in the kitchen. I miss the way he crinkled his eyes when he had a good belly laugh and how the sound of his laugh always made everyone else join in, whether they knew what he was laughing at or not. I miss kissing him goodnight and closing my eyes knowing that tomorrow would be a new adventure with him by my side.

I miss being in love…

I miss my best friend. Jeff knew me better than I knew myself and I didn't have to give any background information when telling a story. He was the first person I called whenever something happened and I needed to share it – good news, bad news, gossip, and everything else that ever came up. He always seemed to understand how I was feeling and knew just what to say to make me feel better. He never judged me for saying something before thinking, and he continued to love me no matter how stupid I acted. He was my constant companion and he would always go anywhere with me just so that we could spend that time together. He was my partner in absolutely every sense of the word.

The list goes on and on so how can I pick just one thing that I miss the most? Simple. **I miss my husband.**

I Love You, Dear Brother

By

Hattie Lou Stapleton

Every Breath I take is in a world without you in it, I don't understand this world.

I remember when we were little, walking in the woods, and we would have to step over an old bridge or ditch. You would hold your hand out to me to help me across. Having a big brother always meant I had someone to run to for help when the world overwhelmed me. Over the years that helping hand was just a phone call away.

Most times I would just message you and tell you to call me. You always did. It may have taken a few minutes, hours and once, a few days; yet you always called when I asked. I only ever got a little annoyed at you when you mixed up your times zones and would call me at 2am. Even then, no matter how cranky I was, I was still delighted to hear from you.

I don't know how many times you would call and ask for mom's number. You were always forgetting it. Yet, it didn't matter. As long as I could hear your voice and know that you were okay wherever you were, that was all that mattered.

I loved your stories about places you had been and things you had done. Each one was more outrageous than the last, even if you were telling the same story. I wouldn't just say you exaggerated. I don't think there is a word that describes how much you would embellish a story to make it exciting enough.

One Christmas you started telling us a story of how someone tried to get on the base you were on, but it wasn't a big deal. By the end of the night the story ended with the base being completely out of ammo and the only way you saved everyone was by somehow exploding a jar of nails. We all still laugh about that. We always will.

I am going to miss so many things about you. Things I just took for granted because you were always there. Your smile, your silliness, your smart mouth and your determination to call me by my childhood nickname when no one else did. When no one else was allowed.

Who else am I going to call to commiserate about the insanity of our family? I have had a few offers, but honestly it will never be the same. You always knew exactly what I meant. We were both coming from exactly the same place not just geographically, but emotionally. You just understood me without me having to explain.

I was avoiding writing this. This letter is my way of actually admitting that you're gone. That's not something I wanted to do at all.

The reality is, you won't be calling me to ask for mom's number anymore. The reality is, you've taken your last breath upon this earth. The reality is I will never hear your voice on the other end of a phone call. The reality is that I lost a large piece of my heart and it aches when I think of you.

I so wanted to pretend you were stationed somewhere far away and I am just waiting for the phone to ring. There are moments when I almost believe this because you were gone so often.

In a way, you are stationed somewhere. Looks like God needed another soldier in heaven and we had no choice, but to let you go.

I love you, Dear Brother of mine. I love you as unconditionally now as I did when you were alive. Each time we talked I made sure you knew that and even now when I sit at your grave, I tell you constantly. Someday, when my time here is done, I will get there to heaven and see you again.

Until then, watch over me and put in a good word for me.

My Son

by

Carol S. Shaw

My Son, My Son,

My experiences have been like a rocky unstable road since your passing. It has been like a giant wave crashing into the rocky shores. And then it can become like a smooth glass like mirror.

What do I miss? Your quirky smile and beautiful laughter. The music you played on your keyboard or piano.

What do I regret? Not telling you enough that "I love you."

What issues in our relationship remain unresolved? Why you felt you couldn't reach out to me...I was your mother and you couldn't reach out to me, son, I thought I said I loved you every time we spoke, but I guess it wasn't enough. I'm sorry..I couldn't get to you in time...not even your wingman could reach you. You were too far into the abyss for anyone to reach you. I'm sorry son... really sorry I wasn't able to be there for you.

What do I appreciate the most? Being able to remember your birth, your first steps of life, watching you grow into a handsome man and seeing you graduate from bootcamp into an even stronger young, proud airman that you were. Son, you were my hero! You made me very proud that day. My heart swelled great big that day. You seemed so grown-up but yet you were still my little boy. I know you didn't want me to look at you that way but inside you were still my little boy.

What have I learned about myself, my son, and my relationship? Well, I must say I have had a lot of prayers and faith that has kept me going even when I was about to give up. Jeremy you don't know how close I wanted to end my life just to be with you again. But the love of my family and God kept me from taking the same steps you trod.

What do I want to carry on? Your love of music and care free spirit.

Hanging on...Son I love you....mom

What's On Our Hearts??

What experiences have I been through since my loved one's death?

After the initial outreach from friends, family, and community, everyone goes back to their 'normal' way of life. However, you still feel the same and you feel left behind. That made me feel very empty everyday for about one year. No matter how hard you try to just 'move on' with life, you feel weighed down with the realization that you won't be able to communicate with your loved one for the rest of your life.

~By Michael Hinkle

I retired. I have opened up a new found relationship with a child I lost 17 years ago.....

What do I miss?

My son calling me, his voice, his smile, his scent..... I miss everything about him....

What regrets or guilt do I carry with me?

I could have been, should have been a better Father....

What issues in our relationship remain unresolved?

None. Sean and I were always on the same page.....

~By John DiCicco

What experiences have I been through since my loved one's death?

I have experienced the greatest loss ever. Physical, mental and emotional pain unlike anything I have ever experienced. I have also experienced many blessings in how God has shown me my connection and love I have for my son continues on.

What do I miss?

I miss hearing Ryan's voice, having a conversation with him. I miss Ryan's smile.

What regrets or guilt do I carry with me?

Simply not having enough time!

Forever in our Hearts - **SR. A. RYAN MATTHEWS** November 18, 2009

~By Chrissy Matthews

It has been six months since my son's death. The thing I miss most is picking up the phone and hearing "Hey, Mom."

It has been an emotional roller coaster. Some days I am at the bottom, very sad and disappointed, as I work on projects to honor my son or to preserve his memory, I start to feel better, actually happy at times. Things will go okay for awhile and then, out of the blue the tears start again. At times I feel guilty when I am happy.

~By Chris Janne

~Bill and Tammie Johnson would like to acknowledge the 2nd anniversary of their nephew **SrA Daniel James Johnson's** death

Forever in our hearts...

Resource Center

Note: ***The following resources are intended to provide additional information that may be useful or interesting. Air Force Families Forever, however, cannot attest to the accuracy or value of the information provided. By providing these resources, Air Force Families Forever is not attempting to endorse a program or resource, its only intent is to contribute potentially helpful information.***

Counseling Sources:

Military One Source (MOS) - Provides face-to-face counseling, telephone consultation, online consultation (instant messenger), and financial consultation. www.militaryonesource.mil

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) - Offers bereavement counseling to parents, spouses, and children of service members; also available to reservists and National Guardsmen who die while on duty. www.va.gov

TRICARE through Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) - Appointments with Social Workers, Psychologists, and/or Psychiatrists through referral from primary care physicians (health plan options and costs for TRICARE vary based on the sponsor's military status when he/she died; if surviving family member is a spouse or child) . www.tricare.mil

Education and Employment:

Fisher House Foundation Scholarships for Military Children - A scholarship program for children of military members. www.militaryscholar.org/

Pat Tillman Scholarship - A scholarship intended to cover tuition, fees, books, room and board, as well as child care for spouses of Active Duty and veteran service members. Partners with existing education benefits. http://www.pattillmanfoundation.org/tillman-military-scholars/apply/

Folds of Honor Foundation - Provides scholarships to spouses and children of service members disabled or killed as a result of their military service. www.foldsofhonor.org/

USA Jobs - A job search site to help military spouses find careers with the Federal Government. Also gives the opportunity to use preference as a surviving spouse; preference also applies to surviving children. www.usajobs.com

Career One Stop - Helps military spouses with career planning, training, and job search resources. www.careeronestop.org/militaryspouses

Resource Center cont'd

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Support Groups/Organizations:

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) - Offers peer mentoring, 24/7 information line, publishes quarterly newsletters, hosts online community of survivors (chat rooms, message boards, peer group discussion sites), sponsors military survivor seminars for adults and Good Grief Camps for children). www.taps.org *The U.S. Air Force proudly endorses the* ***TAPS*** *organization*

American Widow Project (AWP) – Emphasis on healing through sharing stories over blogs, getaways, and conventions. www.americanwidowproject.org

Grief Share - Offers weekly grief recovery support groups throughout the U.S. and Canada, and many other international locations. www.griefshare.org

Airmen and Family Readiness centers at DoD installations - Offers a number of services to military members and their families. Services include, but are not limited to: transition assistance, employment readiness, and financial management, relocations, etc. www.afas.org

Air Force Aid Society - Provides emergency financial assistance and education assistance programs to spouses and dependent age children of Air Force personnel who die on Active Duty.

Compassionate Friends - Offers support groups in cities throughout the U.S. and online for bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents. www.compassionatefriends.org

Men's Bereavement Network - Offers support groups throughout the U.S. for men grieving the loss of a spouse, specifically designed to address the unique way in which men grieve. www.mensbereavement.org

Air Craft Casualty Emotional Support Services (ACCESS) - An air disaster bereavement network dedicated to connecting those who lost a loved one in a plane crash. www.accesshelp.org

The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families - An organization that helps grieving children in centers located throughout the U.S. www.dougy.org/

American Gold Star Mothers - A community of mothers who have lost a child while serving on Active Duty. Chapters located throughout the U.S. www.goldstarmoms.com

Gold Star Wives of America - A community of widows and widowers who have lost a spouse on Active Duty. Chapters located throughout the U.S. www.goldstarwives.org

Air Force Families Forever

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For more info & past newsletters go to:

http://www.mortuary.af.mil/library/familiesofthefallensupportbranch/index.asp

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Reference used for newsletter:

www.thegrievingheart.info