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- couponbook**
- News**
- Opinions**
- Blogs
- Columnists
- Courier Times Opinion
- Burlington Opinion
- The Intelligencer Opinion
- Editorials
- Guest Opinions
- Reader Voices
- Information**
- Multimedia**
- Tools**
- Shopping**
- Account**

Fallen Marine's sister will never forget

The Intelligencer

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I awoke on Sept. 11th, 2001 to a phone call from my mom. "I can't believe this!" she cried into the phone. "Believe what?" I answered, still groggy from being awoken. She informed me to turn on the TV. We both watched in horror as the second plane hit the World Trade Center.

"What is going on?" I asked. She told me that there was suspicion that this was a terrorist attack. She had received a call from my brother Travis, a midshipman at the Naval Academy, to say that they were being evacuated, but he did not know where they were being taken.

I hung up with my mom very shaken. I could feel the sense of fear in her voice. I sat in bed for the next two hours and watched the destruction unfold in front of my eyes. Tower one hit. Tower two hit. Pentagon hit. Tower one collapses. Tower two collapses. Plane crashes in Pennsylvania.

Was this really happening? It was almost noon, and I hadn't gotten up from bed for as much as a drink. I was in a state of shock but decided to go about the rest of my daily routine.

As I entered my English class at 12:15, I wondered if my professor was really going to run a normal class. "Pull out a piece of paper and pen," he said as the class settled into their seats. "I assume by now you all know what is going on, so I want you to write your thoughts about it." I sat there for the next 45 minutes and wrote. I wrote about my fears, my uncertainties and about the questions that rattled in my head.

Almost nine years later, as my two young children napped quietly, I decided to take a rainy day for some end-of-the-summer cleaning. I was going through a box in our attic when I came across an old journal. I looked inside and found three torn notebook pages with the date 9/11/01 written at the top. Wow, I thought, not realizing that I had saved them. All my thoughts from that day rushed back.

I sat down to read what I had written and wondered if I would feel the same way. Most of what I put down on paper was about the unanswered questions, because, remember, I wrote this at 12:30 p.m. on 9/11 when the events were still unfolding.

But there was one part that stuck out immediately. I had written:

My dad is a Marine, and my brother is at the Naval Academy and will become a Marine in the near future. What does this mean for them? My ultimate fear is that the events that took place today will lead to a war and that my brother or dad, or both, have to fight in it. I feel that I am strong person, but I do not think I would be able to handle either of them going off to war. I am so scared that what has happened today will forever change my life.

I couldn't have been more on target, because the events of that day did lead to a war - a war that my brother fought and died in. And the events of Sept. 11, 2001, did indeed change my life forever.

Today, I find myself in a place I thought I would never be in life, running a nonprofit that serves to support our wounded veterans and families of the fallen, and organizing multiple 9/11 heroes runs across the country to always remember the sacrifices of our military, police, firefighters, EMTs and all those who lost their lives on 9/11.

Nine years later, the events that took place on 9/11/01 have not faded by any means, but have only made my resolve even stronger to remember all those who lost their lives on that fateful day, and those who lost their lives in the years after as a result of that day.

To my brother Travis and all the others, WE WILL NEVER FORGET.

Ryan Manion Borek is the executive director of the Travis Manion Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports wounded veterans and families of the fallen, and aims to create a generation of future leaders. She is the daughter of retired Marine Col. Tom Manion and the sister of Marine 1st Lt. Travis Manion of Doylestown, who was killed in action in Iraq on April 29, 2007, at age 26.

September 12, 2010 09:31 AM

RATING: ★★★★★

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slhbell54, 09-24-10 6:22 pm | Rate: 0 |

My son, Ty Layton Young was a Marine. He served his country from 2003 to 2008. He came home all in one piece but he could never leave the war behind. He battled survivors guilt and PTSS. My son was killed in a car wreck 9-1-10, and his dad and I have requested the Travis Manion Foundation to receive memorials in his honor. The programs for wounded soldiers, both mentally and physically, were what we wanted to bring attention to. I hope that your programs will also reach out to other parts of our great country, like Texas. Thank you, and I am sorry for your loss. Susie Young Hale

David G. Bustos, 10-05-10 7:31 am | Rate: 0 |

I saw this piece on NBC Nightly and was deeply touched. I have recently written a poem in honor of my two uncles who died in Vietnam, and also to honor other fallen heroes in our great country - that is titled "Brotherly Heroes" and it was read at the traveling Vietnam Wall three weeks ago in Huntington IN.

I would love to send this poem in honor of your Brother as it has much parity. Please e-mail me at dbustos@muncieymca.org
God Bless you and your family!
Sincerely, David G. Bustos

ree_z71, 11-21-10 11:37 am | Rate: 0 |

To slhbell54:

Ma'am, I just found out about Ty. I am truly sorry for your loss! Ty was one of my Marines when we deployed to Iraq in 2006. He was a good Marine and served his country well. RIP TY!

SSgt Russ Evans

1

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