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Courier Times

Manion's best friend killed

By: **GARY WECKSELBLATT**
 Bucks County Courier Times

TEXT SIZE

They will be buried side by side at Arlington cemetery.

When Navy SEAL Lt. Brendan Looney was on duty, he always had on his wedding band, a watch and a bracelet engraved with the name of his best friend, Travis Manion, his Naval Academy roommate who was killed in combat three years ago in Iraq.

Looney, 29, was wearing those special items last Tuesday when the helicopter he was a passenger in crashed in the Zabul province of Afghanistan, taking his life and those of eight other military personnel.

The cause of the crash has not been released but appeared to be accidental, according to The Associated Press.

The news devastated Tom and Janet Manion, Travis' parents who developed a special bond with the Looneys, one unique to military families whose sons and daughters volunteer to go off to war.

"It's a hard thing to describe," Tom Manion said Monday. "Travis and Brendan went through a lot together. They were very close to the same type of person. Both really big family men. + True patriots. Both really believed in freedom, believed in their country.

"They led by example. They may not have been the loudest in the room, but they commanded the most presence. They didn't have to say much.

"In some respects, just losing Brendan is revisiting things all over again."

So much so that on Friday the Manions will be moving Travis' remains from Calvary Cemetery in West Conshohocken to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia where the two men who gave their lives for their country can be buried side by side.

Looney's burial is scheduled for Monday.

It was one of the first requests made by Looney's wife, Amy, when she learned of her husband's death. It turns out that Travis had also wanted to be buried at Arlington.

"When we lost Travis things moved very quickly," said Tom Manion, who visited the Looney family at its Maryland home the day they learned of his death. "It wasn't too long after we had the service that we began to hear that Travis had expressed a desire to be at Arlington with his brothers. The more we talked about it, the more we thought that's something we should really think about as a family."

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Janet Manion said Amy's wish "was our signal to get Travis down there."

Marine 1st Lt. Travis Manion was killed April 29, 2007, in Fallujah at the age of 26 when he exposed himself to enemy fire to enable the rescue of wounded members of his patrol.

Manion was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with Valor and the Silver Star for his heroic actions in Iraq. As a testament to how much he was admired, the Iraqis named their new headquarters Combat Outpost Manion in his honor.

When Looney heard of Manion's death, he tried to get a pass out of SEAL training but was told he couldn't leave.

He called Janet Manion and told her he was dedicating his efforts to Travis. Looney ended up as Honor Man, No. 1 in his SEAL class.

His first stop after training was the Manions' Doylestown home, where he told the family his achievements were "because Travis was with me."

Similarly, at his wedding, Looney gave Janet Manion his Navy SEAL Trident.

"I want you to have this because Travis earned this right along with me," he told her.

Ryan Manion, Travis' sister, recalled the men referring to one another as "brothers from another mother."

The Manions are suffering with mixed emotions, Tom Manion said. He said the loss of Looney still hurts and calls it a "total shock." But having the best friends together, he said, will give the families comfort.

"It's a sad statement of the times," he said. "As Americans we should be very thankful we have brave young men step forward to do what's necessary to protect this country."

Janet Manion said, "I know there are two special people looking down on all of us. Travis and Brendan are guarding the streets of heaven."

In lieu of flowers, the Looney family asks that donations be made in Brendan's name to the Travis Manion Foundation.

September 28, 2010 02:20 AM

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The soldiers do not speak. Nevertheless, they are heard in the still houses: who has not heard them? They have a silence that speaks for them at night and when the clock counts. They say: We are young. We have died. Remember us. They say: We have done what we could but until it is finished it is not done. They say: We have given our lives but until it is finished no one can know what our lives gave. They say: Our deaths are not ours: they are yours. They will mean what you make them. They say: Whether our lives and our deaths are for peace and a new hope or for nothing we cannot say: it is you who must say this. They say: We leave you our deaths. Give them their meaning. We were young. they say. We have died. Remember us: Eternal rest Travis and Brendan,
In Bello Misericordia
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I pray for God's comfort for these families while they are grieving. Rest peacefully Lt. Looney and 1st Lt. Manion. Your love of country and your sacrifice will not be forgotten.

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