

SOS

SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES NEWSLETTER

P1
June/July

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EVENTS

Saturday, June 27

Fort Benning's Independence Day Celebration at Stewart Watson Field, Ft. Benning: Free youth activities, fireworks, food, and free entertainment by Edwin McCain Band, David Ryan Harris, and Carters Chord.

Friday, July 17-Sunday, July 17

TAPS Good Grief Camp-Out at Fort Campbell, Kentucky for children ages 8-18. Please visit www.taps.org for more details.

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Remembering

Robert G. Griffin

World War II Veteran and P.O.W.
Story by Jennifer Pierce, Survivor

I did not meet Robert Griffin, "Grandpa Griff," until my Dad married my step-mom, when I was a young girl. From then on, our new family made yearly trips to visit my new grandparents in Tacoma, Washington. I remember Grandpa Griff being very sweet. He was quiet for the most part, but had a lot of witty jokes. He was also a very active, 120 pound elderly man, managing a beautiful garden and cooking us elaborate breakfasts.

Stumbling out of bed one early morning, roughly around 0700, I asked Grandpa Griff, "Why do you wake up so early?" He endearingly stated, "Because I have to feed my troops." Little did I know as a 10 year old, that Griff was a War World II Veteran.

Later on in my teen years, our family made another trip out to Washington. We decided to go out for dinner one night and I happen to be seated across Griff.

I remember I made a comment to him about seeing so many soldiers around town as we were near Fort Lewis. Griff told me that during the war, he and his buddies would ignore any new Soldiers that arrived to their unit. They reasoned that avoiding relationships with the new Soldiers would prevent them from feeling pain and grief if the Soldiers were killed in action.

That one and only statement regarding his wartime experience haunted me. I started to grasp the danger, sacrifice, and emotional impact of WWII.



Robert Griffin: Top Left



Story continued on page 4...

From Echoes, The Bulletin for Retired Soldiers, Surviving Spouses, and Families

The Chief of Staff, Army (CSA) Retiree Council met to report issues at the Pentagon this past April 20-24.

Regarding Survivors, the Council suggested eliminating the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset to the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity, authorizing space-available air travel for surviving spouses, and issuing eligible surviving spouses an indefinite ID card at age 65.

The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) is in the first phase of its initiative to eliminate social security numbers from all ID cards.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that DoD will fully fund TRICARE for FY 2010 (beginning October 1, 2009). No increase in TRICARE Fees for FY 2010!

From AUSA

House action: H.R. 775 – Cosponsors: 192

Introduced by Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Texas: Repeals the requirement for reduction of Survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan to offset the receipt of veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation; Referred to Committee: Armed Services

Senate Action: S. 535 – Cosponsors: 33

Introduced by Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Florida: Repeals the requirement for reduction of Survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation. Referred to committee: Armed Forces

From myarmyoncesource.com

As of February 16th of this year, the media is allowed to take pictures of flag-draped caskets of fallen soldiers returning to Dover Air Force Base, given the Surviving families' permission.

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) has a new policy that allows currently enrolled students in Domestic Elementary and Secondary school (DDESS), who are dependents of a Fallen Military Member, to remain in DDESS schools without limitation, regardless of their physical residence or upcoming school transition points.

The Ladies on Yellow

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. is a non-profit national service organization that was incorporated in 1945. Gold Star Wives are widows and widowers of Fallen Soldiers who died while serving in the Armed Forces of United States. The organization offers member support services such as:

- Networking in local chapters and regional conferences
- Fund-raising Teas that support projects honoring the memory of our spouses
- Memorial Day and Veterans Day program involvement
- Quarterly newsletter on membership involvement, legislative and educational information
- Special recognition awards for outstanding performance in GSW
- National Conventions

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. members also volunteer in community, military, and veterans hospitals; provides its members information on pertinent Survivor issues (DIC, Cost of Living Adjustment, DEERS, etc.); and offers representation on behalf of the membership for improved benefits for all surviving spouses and their children

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. is a great resource for gaining support from other Survivors and having your voice be heard in making changes at the congressional level.

Avenue of Flags

The Gold Star Wives of **America**, Inc. Chattahoochee Valley chapter accepts donations for their Flag Fund. Donations of \$25 can purchase a flag in honor of a Fallen Soldier. Gold Star Wives will also place the Soldier's name on a plaque located at the Veterans Council on Victory Drive. Flags are placed along Victory Drive during patriotic holidays.



www.goldstarwives.org



Today more people are concerned with their savings. With the financial crisis evolving, the simple question is can I save in a down market? I think the answer is yes. Below is an article I found on Kiplinger's titled "How to Boost

Your Savings". I've changed it around a bit to better suit our readers, however the content remains the same. I agree with three of his ways to help Boost Your Savings.

How to Boost Your Savings

The following is a guide to the kinds of accounts that will help you squeeze more out of your savings, plus some tips on how to use them. July 2007

Understanding the reasons for budgeting is a good way to help achieve long term financial stability. The article stated "As the years go by, the difference can amount to thousands and thousands of dollars added to your net worth."

1. Don't keep a lot of cash on you.

Keeping large amounts of cash around the house instead of putting it in the bank, where it will earn interest, or in an investment plan, where it can grow, will deprive you of any opportunities to let your money make more money.

2. Don't have more taxes withheld than you owe.

Many people deliberately have too much taken out of their salaries to avoid a large tax bill in April or to accumulate a refund. Those excess withholdings could be put to work earning interest, leaving you with even more left over after your taxes are paid.

3. Get the max from your savings.

For most people, the difference between depositing a check today and depositing it next week amounts to nickels and dimes in lost interest. The real aim here is to establish good money-management habits. As your income grows, the payoff will grow along with it.

In order to achieve a lucrative savings, you must know where you are at now financially and where you are going. The foundation for achieving this is through a Financial Needs Analysis.

The Emotional & Physical Effects of Grief

From "I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping and Healing after the Sudden Death of a Loved One." By Brook Noel and Pamela D. Blair, PhD



In their book on grief, Brook Noel and Pamela Blair, PhD, explain the common reactions and feelings that occur in most everyone dealing with the loss of a

loved one. The authors explain the importance of learning about these common effects to relieve feelings of being "crazy" or alone. The following are normal grief reactions:

Exhaustion

Noel and Blair state that fatigue and low energy levels are the primary symptoms of grief. Simple tasks that normally take 2-5 minutes, such as mailing a letter, could take a whole day. The authors suggest taking it slow and allowing your mind and body to experience the grief process.

Distraction

The authors warn that instances of distraction are signals from your body that you are going too fast. They suggest lowering your expectations of your daily functioning, as you will get better with time.

Denial

Denying that you have lost your loved one is your body and mind's way of protecting itself from dealing with the traumatic reality, too much, too soon. Some Survivors may say "He's on a trip and will be back soon," or "I expect her to walk in the door any minute." Though



denial may bring relief initially, Survivors must seek professional assistance if they cannot gradually accept the realities of their loss.

Continued from p1, Remembering Robert G. Giffin

Robert Griffin did not talk much about his personal war experiences. However, we do know general details about his military career. He was about 17 years old when he enlisted into the Army during World War II. He was assigned to the new 295th Engineer Combat Battalion, which was created specifically to support operations in WWII. Griff's battalion often came under fire while attempting to build structures and detonate enemy mines that were hid under casualties or dead cows. They were trained to secure their construction sites, often times firing back at German enemies. The 295th was famously known for building the "Truman Bridge" which enabled the 329th Infantry's drive from the Rhine to assault the Elbe River, Germany. Shortly after, the German Army dispersed and surrendered. Victory was officially announced on May 8, 1945.

A Tech/4, Grandpa Griff fought in the Battle of the Bulge, where he was captured by the Germans. He escaped P.O.W. camp, only to be recaptured until his liberation in April, 1945. His other military battles and campaigns included Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, and Central Germany. He received the following decorations: American Theatre, Good Conduct, EAME Ribbon Battle Stars, Victory Medal and the Prisoner of War Medal.

Following the war, Grandpa Griff worked various skilled trades such as carpentry and iron work in order to pay for his college education. He earned a B.A. in 1953 and a Law Degree in 1956. He enjoyed helping others and was very generous to his family, friends, and others less fortunate. He was very active in organizations such as the Tacoma Elk's Lodge # 174, the 33rd Degree Mason, and the Shriner's. In 1996, Grandpa Griff was recognized by the Washington State Bar Association for forty years of service to the legal profession in the State of Washington. He had several court cases throughout his legal career that have changed the laws in the State of Washington.

Grandpa Griff died, peacefully, January 8, 2008. He proudly served his nation by fighting in WWII and never asked for, nor received anything in return. What little I know about his experiences as a soldier is enough for me to consider him a Hero. He will never be forgotten. Griff is greatly missed by his family, especially his beloved wife, Frances Griffin.

At Survivor Outreach Services, we want to honor you and your Fallen Soldier. We invite you to share the stories of your loved one, as well as your journey through grief and healing. Please email your story and any photos you would like to share to Jennifer Pierce, Support Coordinator: jennifer.r.pierce@us.army.mil. If you have any questions, please call 706-545-7517.

Continued from p3, The Emotional & Physical Effects of Grief

Depression

Most often, Survivors experience depression as part of their grief. Experiencing sadness, loss of interest in activities, fatigue, loss of appetite or weight gain, difficulty concentrating, hopelessness, guilt, and physical aches and pains are all normal grief reactions. However, if a Survivor experiences severe, prolong depression or thoughts of suicide, she/he must get professional help. Survivor Outreach Services can help you find help! If you are having thoughts of harming yourself or suicide, please call 911, Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, VA Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK, or the 24-Hour Help Line: (706) 327-3999.

Anger

Noel and Blair state that anger is a natural response to the loss of your loved one and is, in fact, healthy. The following are some of the reasons you may become angry:

- When you're not getting enough support or help from others. Try to ask others for assistance
- You need to blame or hold someone responsible for the death of your loved one
- You may become angry with the last person who was with your Soldier
- Anger can result from unresolved conflicts or anger you had with your loved one preceding their death
- Criticizing yourself for all the bad times or times of conflict before you lost your Soldier that you feel responsible for. Keep in mind, it is unrealistic to have a perfect relationship with anybody
- You can experience anger when you do not express your feelings. Because anger is not usually associated with grief or is taboo in some families or support networks, Survivors may suppress their anger

Seek guidance from professionals while navigating through your anger. The authors suggest the following healthy expressions of anger:

- Beat a pillow
- Express your anger through a journal
- Locate an unpopulated area and scream for as long as you need
- Vent to a friend or counselor

Look for more excerpts from *I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping and Healing after the Sudden Death of a Loved one* By Brook Noel and Pamela D. Blair, PhD in next month's Survivor Outreach Services newsletter.



Fort Benning Survivor Outreach Services:
Support (706) 545-7517
Financial Counseling: (706) 545-8990

Military OneSource
12 free sessions per issue from a counselor in your area
1-800-342-9647
www.militaryonesource.com

24 Hour Suicide Help Line: (706) 327-3999

Fort Benning Department of Behavioral Health:
(706) 545-3590/2273

Fort Benning Emergency Room (MACH):
(706) 544-1502

TRICARE behavioral health provider locator &
appointment assistance (Southeast Region)
1-877-747-9579

After hours Duty Chaplain: (706) 545-2218

VA Suicide Prevention Hotline (Available to active
duty and retired Survivors): 1-800-273-TALK

VA Grave information: 1-800-697-6947

VA benefits questions (Burial, death pension, etc.):
1-800-827-1000

VA Bereavement Counseling
Free counseling to all family members including
spouses, children, parents and siblings
(202) 461-6530
(202) 273-9116

Fort Benning Veterans Affairs: (706) 545-4887
For Columbus, GA residents: (706) 649-1264
For Phenix City, AL residents: (334) 298-9673

Long Term Family Case Management: (866) 272-5841

My Army OneSource
Maintain's the Army's main Survivor Outreach Services
site under "Family Programs and Services"
www.myarmyonesource.com

Tragedy Assistance Program (TAPS)
Operators available 24/7 to offer comfort and programs
1-800-959-TAPS (8277)
www.taps.org

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
1-888-751-6350/(205) 823-2760
www.goldstarwives.org

Financial Resources

Army Emergency Relief
(706) 626-0189
www.aergq.org

www.annualcreditreport.com

www.bankrate.com

www.morningstar.com

www.edmunds.com

www.nada.com

www.myarmybenefits.com