

Root Scoop II

Vol. XXI, Issue 4

“The First Duty is to Remember”

Nov/Dec 2013

30th Beirut Remembrance

Record Turnout; 790 Attend Evening Banquet

Record numbers of families, veterans and friends converged on Jacksonville, N.C. October 22 and 23 for the 30th Beirut Remembrance.

More than 500 made the 6 a.m. pilgrimage to the Beirut Memorial for the annual candlelight service.

“Borrowing a custom from native Americans, we will say the name of each fallen warrior, and in saying their name they will live again,” remarked BVA founding president retired Marine Major Robert Jordan.

A crowd estimated at more than 3,000 people attended the 10:30 a.m. official ceremony at the Memorial.

“I have no expectations that this morning’s remembrance is

any less painful in 2013 than it was in 1983,” said Gen. James F. Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps. “This is a heavy-hearted day for the nation and its Corps of Marines.”

Gen. Amos explained the history and events leading up to the attacks and the fight against terrorism that continues today.

“On a morning much like today, terror struck,” Amos said. “Two hundred and forty-one Marines, sailors and soldiers volunteered to make a difference and serve their country. We honor each of them.”

Retired Gen. Alfred M. Gray Jr., 29th commandant of the Marine Corps, took the stage to speak to the crowd, much like he did three decades ago when he made

the announcement of what happened in Beirut.

“The warriors did not die in vain, and we must remember that,” he said. “Their legacy lives on.” Amos and Gray joined military and civilian leaders in a wreath laying ceremony in front of the memorial while the 8th Marine Regiment fired the rifle salute.

A record 790 guests were seated for the banquet the evening of Oct. 23 at the Goettge Field House. (At the 25th Remembrance, about 650 attended.)

“For me, I have lived every day of my life with a hole in my heart that will never be filled,” commented guest speaker Will Hudson, who was only 8 months old when his father was killed in Beirut. (*see Will’s entire speech, page 6-9*)



The Goettge Fieldhouse was wall to wall with Beirut veterans and families on October 23, 2013.

BVA President Announces Resignation

Renshaw Thanks Members; Urges Continuing Participation and Support

It's been another great year and it started out in May with a many Beirut Veterans and Family members getting involved to make plans and arrangements for all sorts of events that would bring us together. The first being Memorial Day weekend and then other events or gatherings throughout the year and leading up to the 30th Remembrance in Jacksonville, NC.

It is great to see all those doing their part getting involved and it's even better seeing more people showing up to attend the events. For those who have not been able to attend any of these events and those that are just now finding us, you are missing out on some great times. Being together with your brothers and members of our families and forming new life long relationship with those you meet is something you are missing out on.

We are reaching more of our brothers and families who are finding our website and finding the Beirut Veteran groups on Facebook. Our membership is growing because of this and it is showing by the growing numbers in attendance at the events that have been planned. Each and every one of us has something to offer to someone by being involved even in the littlest way, whether it's just some one seeing your name or reading a post on Facebook or others who call your name and mention you in their post.

The 30th Remembrance in Jacksonville, NC went well this year. I believe we had the biggest turnout I have seen yet and it was great to see everyone. I hope that each person who attended felt it was as good as I did. The 30th T-shirts and sweat shirts were designed by Mark Hacala and the coins by Jeff Hamman and both items were a hit. We had others who came in with their own items and their own designs and they too were well received.

I would like to thank everyone who helped out in some way; you saw many of them behind tables or performing other duties. We couldn't have done it without them. THANK YOU. A special mention and thank you

goes out to Dan Joy, Randy Gaddo, and Alex Hacala; had they not been involved all year during the planning process, the Remembrance would not have been what it was. And I should mention a few of those who gave their time for the 3 days we were there - Ellen Gaddo, Phyllis Renshaw, the UAW guys, David and Julie Gonsoski, Cindy Walsh and Bill Thompson. For all the others who have not been mentioned and helped, I would like to say "Thank You." Without you it would have been hard to accomplish what we did.

The BVA has now been around for 21 years and we are going strong, but we need members stepping up to fill positions within the BVA. We need someone to take over our website as webmaster desperately, so if you have any knowledge or think you can pick up on it, please contact us. There are a few other positions that are in need too.

In closing, I would like to inform the members of the BVA that I have turned in my resignation to the Board of Directors and asked to step down as President of the BVA, so this will possibly be my last post. If it is to be, I want to thank everyone for all their support, kind words and prayers I've had over the last 9 years I have been involved with the BVA. Being given the opportunity to represent the BVA, the Families and most of all our fallen brothers is something I will always cherish. I will miss being a part of this organization, but feel it is time to step aside and allow someone else to present their own fresh, new ideas. I'll still be involved, just not in a leadership role. Whoever the BOD selects to finish out my term, I ask that you continue to support them as you have done for me because that person will be taking on a huge responsibility to carry the BVA forward reminding everyone "The First Duty is to REMEMBER".

Semper Fi...Craig Renshaw



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This publication is intended as a communication tool for members and friends of the BVA. Views and opinions are those of contributors and do not necessarily reflect views of BVA board, officers or members.

Remembrances We've Heard About

Minnesota Honors Beirut Fallen



Three headstones, representing 1st Lt. John Thomas Downing, left, and Lance Cpls. Thomas G. Lamb, rear, and John Tishmack, right, are draped with Marine uniform jackets during a remembrance Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2013, for Marines from Minnesota killed in the 1983 Beirut, Lebanon, Marine Barracks bombing. The Remembrance was held at the Ft. Snelling National Cemetery. Photo courtesy of Patricia Boyd Peerson, who organized the event, which included Patriot Guard riders, a bagpiper and cedar crosses; it is hoped to be an annual event.

Remember the Peacekeepers

30th Anniversary 1983 Bombing of Beirut

October 20, 2013

1:00 pm

Arlington National Cemetery



Coaldale, PA held a 30th Beirut Remembrance Oct. 23 at their Coaldale Veterans Memorial Garden, especially honoring the families who lost loved ones in Lebanon.

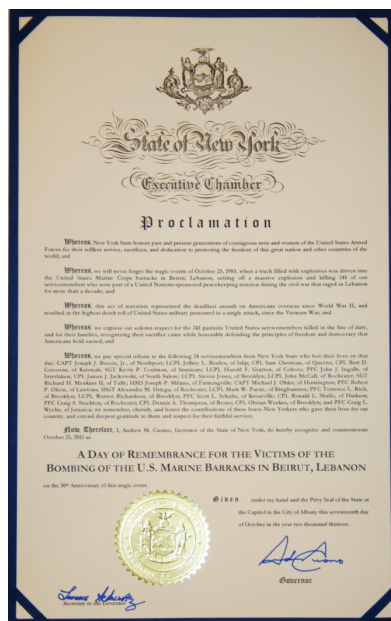


VOICES FROM BEIRUT:
The Peacekeepers Speak
Edited by Beirut Gold
Star Mothers
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Copies Available, \$10 each: send check made out to cash to either:
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Or
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New York State Remembers 30th with Proclamation & Flags Flown Half-Staff



Beirut parents John & Mary Ellen Jackowski (center) were asked by Carmella LaSpada of **NO GREATER LOVE** to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on October 20 in remembrance of Beirut 1982-1984. Many people attended the ceremony at Arlington Cemetery, including Beirut Vets Jeff Handy, Paul Segarra, and Kevin Ayres -- to name just a few. (Photo Courtesy of Mary Ellen Jackowski)

A Marathon Effort!

Beirut Vet and Team Complete 26 Miles In Honor of Beirut Fallen

Editor's Note: Army Veteran Mike Chard, his Navy Ensign daughter and two Marine 2nd Lieutenants ran the Marine Corps Marathon October 27 in honor of those killed in Beirut between 1982-84. They ran carrying the U.S. flag, a BVA flag and a BVA banner containing the names of all those on the Memorial Wall, and signed by attendees at the 30th Remembrance. Following is his sitrep from that mission:

As the BVA leadership began to ramp up for the 30th ceremonies, I wondered how I might be able to contribute to the effort.

After running the race in 2008, I knew then that I wanted to run it again in 2013, and I knew that I wanted to do it in way that would better project the BVA mission.

As fall rolled around, I made contact with Randy Gaddo, Cliff Walling, & Craig Renshaw. As in 2008, Randy got the wheels turning with the Marathon Committee, and it was not long until I was contacted by Ms. Tami Faram from Quantico to discuss how the committee could help support our BVA mission of remembering our fallen.

In Marine Corps fashion it was not long until the path forward was set. In 2008 I ran with a small flag and banner with the names of all KIA, but it just seemed to fall short of what really needed to be done. As I worked through the particulars it came to me that it would be nice if there was representation from each service branch that lost men in Beirut.

It was at this point that my daughter, Ali, came to mind since she was a newly coined ensign with the Navy Nurse Corps. During her commissioning, my wife and I had met a number of Marine Cadets in her class as well as Marines who were cadre at her ROTC unit in New York. When I asked my daughter about joining me at the race there was no hesitation, and so at that point we had Army and Navy representation; we just needed the Marines.

Ali quickly located two of her classmates who had recently commissioned into the Marine Corps, LT Song Chen and

LT Mark Dela Pena, who both said that they would help in the effort.

So with plenty of horsepower now available, I knew that we could carry several full size flags. We settled on running with an American Flag, a BVA flag, and the names banner listing all 270 KIA. At this point Cliff Walling asked me what I needed and without any further question procured the requested flags and sent them to Craig Renshaw before departing to China on a mission trip.

With the flags now in hand Randy, Craig, and I started working through how best to get all 270 names on the banner. At Randy's urging we decided it best to try and get the names onto the banner before meeting at Camp Lejeune on the 23rd. It then became a question of how and who would take on the significant task of writing all 270 names on the banner. I can only say that we were incredibly lucky to have Craig's mother Martha Renshaw step forward with an offer to help.

I am still not sure how she did it, but the result was picture perfect. Mrs. Renshaw had painstakingly hand printed each and every one of the 270 men's names in a military, dress-right-dress order that would make any Drill Instructor proud. In the meantime I sent flag poles to the other three running team members to practice with. Carrying the large 3' x 5' flags takes a bit of getting used to since it changes one's gait, especially on windy days.

I left Anchorage on the 20th of October flying into DC on the 21st and then made my way directly to Jacksonville. I did not know exactly what to expect since this was the first Remembrance that I had attended. Upon arrival at the USO on the 21st I met Randy, Craig, Bill

Thompson, and other central figures of the BVA organization. Craig handed off the BVA Flag and Banner to me and we made plans for the gathering the next day at the Lejeune Field House.

I knew up front that the Remembrance as a whole would be a solemn, humbling experience. Craig & Randy had advised me to get to the field house a bit early on the 22nd in order to get a table set up for the signing of the names banner. Cliff Walling had made sure that the banner was two sided and assembled so that names could be placed on both sides. Since we now had all 270 names of the KIA on one side, we asked that anyone so moved sign the banner on the opposite side while they were at the Fieldhouse. It did not take long before I noted a very similar pattern of what would take place all day long. With the banner placed up so that the list of names was visible, veterans and family members would approach the flag in search of a specific name. Almost to the person, I watched as they would scroll down through the names with their fingers until they came upon the one they were looking for. At that moment there was always a pause and a silence as they considered the name and memory of that man. There is something very final about seeing the names written out. I suppose this is part of what makes the Wall such a powerful symbol of just how much America lost during those years. **Con't p. 5**



Beirut Vet Mike Chard and his team carry flags and banners in Marathon

Photo Courtesy Mike Chard

Marathon Effort...from pg. 4

For me it was an incredibly rewarding experience to share a few words with each of those who signed the banner in memory of the men they had come to remember. It was humbling beyond my expectations to meet the BVA members as well as the mothers and sisters, the brothers and fathers of those who had fallen some 30 years past.

At the closing dinner on the 23rd I was again struck by the organization's commitment to remembering those lost and the lifting up of their families. That evening I had the opportunity to speak with Colonel Geraghty, Lt. Colonel Gerlach, and Major Jordan who all epitomize the idea of what true leadership looks like. I personally have taken a lesson from their examples of what it really means to lead.

On the 24th I drove to DC in order to take part in the Marine Corps Marathon press conference on the 25th. Race Director, Rick Nealis, took time from his schedule to personally wish the BVA good luck in our running of the race. The BVA was specifically mentioned by name at the press conference and the BVA running team was recognized in the official marathon magazine. With the press conference over, there was nothing left but to get the job done on race day.

The day before the race was very windy which gave us all pause for thought with regard to carrying the flags. Preparing for a marathon takes lots of road time and for LT Chen who was then in the middle of Officer Basic at Quantico extra time was definitely not a luxury that he had. Nonetheless he managed to put in the needed mileage and was ready on race day along with LT. Dela Pena, my daughter and me.

Race morning was in the 40's when we all met at Fort Meyer. We then made the short walk out of Wright Gate to the Marathon Start, all virtually in the shadows of the Iwo Jima Memorial where the actions in Lebanon are recorded in stone along with the likes of Belleau Wood, Corregidor, Vietnam, & Korea.

As we uncased the flags it was hard not to think of those men who did not come home with the rest of us. It was also hard not to be a bit worried about making a good showing for the BVA especially after having just met so many of the members and families. But all of that quickly went away as the race started and all 30,000 runners began their trek to the finish line. It did not take long before people began calling out to us as they recognized the BVA logo on our shirts and the large BVA flag. I had Marines who I had met at Camp Lejeune call out to me as we passed by.

Around mile 16 we were greeted by an unusually robust call to the Beirut Veterans, as I looked around I was greeted by Walt Ford from the Leatherneck waving encouragement to us. I pulled up long enough to shake hands with Walt and say a quick hello. The staff at the Leatherneck & Walt in particular have been very supportive of the BVA and our mission of Remembering.

As we made our way to the finish line simply enjoying the bright sunny day and being part of something bigger than ourselves, I was again reminded of the 270 Beirut servicemen who were not alive to enjoy the day as well, but then I only had to

Mike Chard (center), his daughter Navy Ensign Ali Chard and Marine Second Lieutenants Song Chen (front) and Mark Dela Pena - The BVA Marathon Team



Photo Courtesy Mike Chard

look towards Arlington and the Iwo Jima Memorial to be reminded that not only the BVA but our nation as well remembers our losses suffered in Lebanon.

On the night of the 23rd at the Lejeune Fieldhouse as I shook hands with LtCol. Gerlach and said goodbye he uttered to me the two words that universally identify a United States Marine... "Semper Fidelis." There is something incredibly powerful in that challenge of forever remaining faithful and always remembering.

For me it is an honor to be part of an organization whose entire existence is focused on Remembering Our Fallen. I have always been proud to be part of the BVA but never more so than after having had the privilege of meeting so many of the members and families at the 30th Remembrance. I would like to thank the BVA as a whole for allowing me to do my very small part in fulfilling our collective duty to Remember.

Thanks Team, from the BVA!

The First Duty Is To Remember



Survivor To Fighter

Guest Speaker Will Hudson Inspires Banquet Guests

Editor's Note: The guest speaker at the 30th Beirut Remembrance, Will Hudson, delivered a memorable and inspiring message about losing his father, Navy Lieutenant (Dr.) John Hudson in 1983. The speech, entitled "Survivor to Fighter," is re-printed with permission here in its entirety:

I would first like to take the opportunity to thank the Beirut Veterans of America for the opportunity to speak tonight. In 1992, the BVA made it their primary goal to ensure that the world did not forget that American servicemen and their families paid a steep price in the

name of Peace in Beirut. I think the attendance in this room tonight is a testament to the steadfast dedication the members of this organization have given to this cause. I would also like to thank the Jacksonville community for their commitment over the last 30 years to ensuring that we have a place to heal and remember. We are all truly indebted to these groups and their service to all of us is greatly appreciated. Tonight marks a significant step for the BVA in that it represents the first time a family member has ever been asked to serve in

the capacity as guest speaker. I am truly honored and humbled to be given this platform. For the families in this room, I hope to be a voice to your experience. For months following my first conversation with Randy about speaking tonight, I struggled with the direction I would take.

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Below: Will Hudson with 10-month old son, John William, at the Beirut Memorial October 23, 2013

Photo Courtesy Lisa Hudson



Guest Speaker, from p. 6:

My mind toiled with how I could speak to a room full of people, most of whom lived the day to day events of October 23, 1983. I felt as if I didn't deserve to speak; almost as if I had not earned the right of passage required to stand before you because I was not there and even more so because I am not a Marine. Knowing that I could not impart some great wisdom on Beirut left me feeling inadequate. But then I realized I had a unique opportunity. I could tell my story; one that has not been told before. One that is distinct and lends perspective on what it means to have your life completely defined by Beirut. I take solace in knowing that I can bridge the gap that exists between many of you in this room with a firsthand experience and those in this room who have lived the secondhand effects. I take pride in being given the chance to explain who I am as a result of losing my father and to explain the common journey we all share. And finally, I find fulfillment in having the stage to tell you all what a night like tonight means to me.

30 years ago today, everyone in this room, in one capacity or another, had their world literally turned upside down. For many in the world, Beirut is a distant place in the Middle East. For those in this room, it is as close to our hearts as our own home. Some of you were

there as firsthand witnesses. Some of you heard and saw the tragedy through news accounts. Almost all of you bore witness to the pure evil that unfolded that day in Beirut. I simply cannot relate to either. I do not know what it was like to serve in Beirut nor can I conceive of the feeling of despair most of you felt knowing that your loved one was there. I do not remember what it was like to sit through their funerals nor do I know what it was like to try to pick up the shattered pieces of your life after such a loss. That experience is distant to me and I cannot imagine walking a day in your shoes. But what I hope to impart is that while I am separated from some of you by a generation of age, and to some of you by the lack of firsthand experience with Beirut, we all share the unifying common bond of struggle. There are many families and servicemen in this room who have struggled for 30 years and I hope to honor you. There might even be other children here tonight that share my story and I hope you find comfort in knowing you are not alone.

I was 3 months old when my dad was sent to Beirut and 8 months old when he died. I have no memory of him, I have no memory of the day he died, and I have no memory of any of the days, months, and immediate years that followed. For many of you, October 23rd marks the day your world

changed. It is the day that you lost a piece of yourself. For me, I have lived every day of my life with a hole in my heart that will never be filled. You may remember what it felt like to be whole before that day; I have lived my entire life feeling incomplete. At four years old, I asked my dad's best friend if he would be my father. At the time, I could not comprehend the magnitude of that question nor did I understand what having a father really even meant; but at four, I knew I was supposed to have one and I knew that I wanted one. I have never heard my father's voice and I have never seen his face. I will never know what it feels like to have someone call you their "son" and I will never know what it feels like to call someone "dad."

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Below: Will and mother, Lisa, Hudson



Photo: courtesy Lisa Hudson

Guest Speaker, from p. 7...

Every joyful milestone in my life has also been a painful reminder of what I was also missing. All I ever wanted was to know that my father would be proud of me and to have the opportunity to share those special moments with him. But I will never know that feeling. I have stood with my mom in a hotel hallway and sobbed on the happiest day of my life, my wedding, thinking about how badly I wanted my father standing up there with me. When most kids are dreaming of what they want to be when they grow up, I was laying in my bed day dreaming of what it would feel like to embrace him; just one time.

My mom never remarried; I spent my entire life as an only child of a single parent. She was my best friend growing up and was, is and always will be my hero. We have always been very close and a result of this, I have had the front row seat to watch the story of her life unfold after Beirut. She has always struggled; I know she lost a huge part of herself when my father died that is never coming back. Her entire life has been one giant sacrifice for me and I pray that one day I can help pay her back for the life she has given me. She ensured I had a chance to succeed and she made every possible attempt to shield me from her own personal struggles, knowing I had enough to face on my own, and for that, I will forever be indebted to her. I have thought about the dichotomy of our different experiences in life and often wondered what is worse; to lose something you love or to never have something to love? And in some way or another, all of us in this room fall into one of these experiences. I have pondered that question for many years and to this day, I still do not have an answer. And ultimately, I know I do not have an answer because there is no answer. There is no better or worse. We



Photo Courtesy Lisa Hudson

are all in this together no matter what our individual experiences might be. On October 23rd, despite different backgrounds and different circumstances, we all lost something special to us. That day, we all set sail on a common journey with the ultimate goal of simply surviving one day at a time. And as we sit here together tonight, 30 years later, it is clear to me that we all did survive. And it is even clearer to me why we are survivors. My watershed moment came when I was seven years old; it was when I first realized I was going to fight an uphill battle for the rest of my life. My mom got me involved in the Cub Scouts and one of the first major events was the "Father / Son campout." A friend's father approached my mom and told her that he wanted to make sure I came along and asked if, along with his son, we could all go together and he would be my surrogate father. The gravity of the event did not register with me; going camping simply seemed like innocent fun. I can vividly remember that night sitting around a campfire watching all of my peers interact with their fathers. I clearly recall looking around feeling like my friends realized I was different. Even worse, for the first time in my life, I remember not only knowing I was different but feeling like I didn't belong. I laid in my sleeping bag that night and cried myself to sleep. I now realize that it was through that experience that I made a decision that in many ways is

the fulcrum of my life. That decision has shaped my entire character and defined all of my being. That night on that camping trip, I unconsciously decided to become a fighter. From that night forward, I had something to prove. I never wallowed in my sorrows or succumbed to the pressures created by my differences. I cried a lot along the way but I looked at every obstacle as a challenge to be conquered. I have lived my whole life with a chip on my shoulder; bound and determined to succeed in the face of adversity. I carry that philosophy on a daily basis in my overall approach to everyday life. I have always felt like I was fighting life with one hand tied behind my back which has only made me fight that much harder. And all of us in this room share that common thread; we are all survivors because I believe we are all fighters. That is how we are all sitting here sharing in tonight. On October 23, 1983, the evils of this world tried to rob us of our life and rob us of our fight and I know it would give them great dissatisfaction to see us triumphantly sitting here. 30 years later, we are now allowed to not just remember but to celebrate. Because through our fight to arrive on this stage, I believe we have been shaped



from pg 8...

and molded into people who would make our loved ones proud. Fall semester of my senior year in high school, I was sitting at my computer working on college applications. On the application for Furman University was an essay question that asked me to describe an event in my life that I was thankful for and explain why. It was like a light bulb went off in my head. I chose to describe losing my father; not because I am thankful for his death but because I am thankful for the person I have become as a result of losing him. I finally realized after so many years of fighting that I had no idea who I would even be without the trials and tribulations in my life as a result of his death. Who would Will Hudson be? Would I have the same emotions and feelings? Would I approach my life in the same way? Would I be the fighter that I am? Would I have the same compassion and empathy for people? The person I am today is so inextricably linked to the loss of my father that it is impossible to imagine the person I would be without that loss. I would be just like everyone else. On October 23, my father was stolen from my life. On October 23, your friends and loved ones were stolen from your lives. But unknowingly what those evil people gave to us that day was the opportunity to evolve. They gave us the opportunity to stare hardship in the face, accept the burden, and overcome the obstacle. They gave us the chance to become fighters; empowered with the will to succeed and the caution to take nothing for granted. And they gave us the platform to stand before others and testify to that journey in the hope that it may equip them along their own way. Tonight, my heart aches but my resolve is fervent. Tonight, I am truly thankful for the lessons I have learned along my life's journey. Tonight, I believe that with self-reflection, all of you would come to the realization that in some way you are grateful for who you have become. What greater tribute and testimony can we offer to our friends and loved ones than that? To imagine that through our remembrance of them over the last 30 years, through our journey to overcome their loss, that they have so



Will Hudson & son John William at 30th

shaped our being that we now celebrate that transformation? If my dad were sitting here tonight listening to me explain how losing him has been the defining moment of my life while also listening to me list the facets of my character and temperament that have been auspiciously shaped because of it, do you think he would be smiling? I do. And I think that would be true for everyone. And I think that is a cause for celebration. We did not succumb. We are survivors and fighters and I believe we all deserve to be celebrated for that. We deserve credit because I know the journey has been arduous and the path laden with difficulty.

My mom and I have largely stayed away from Jacksonville and Camp Lejeune. I was born here and the first time we ever came back was for the 20th anniversary. For both of us, it is extremely painful to be here; a reminder of what we lost and what could have been. For my mom, the memories are still too vivid and real. She relives it like it happened yesterday. I am sure many of you share her sentiments. But what we are doing here tonight is monumentally important. It not only gives us the chance to reflect and to celebrate but it also gives us a chance to perpetuate the lives of our lost loved ones. I do not know my father and I will never know my father. But a night like tonight is the closest I will ever get to knowing him; it is the opportunity for the spirit of my father to live on in the stories and experiences shared amongst people who knew him. It is a chance for me to live those moments for a few brief minutes and understand who my dad really was. Throughout my 30 years, my father has come alive for me when I have the opportunity to hear what **you** all have to say. It is all I really have and all I will ever have. On July 9, 2012, Nicole and I

welcomed a new John Hudson into the world, named after my father. My greatest dream has been fulfilled; I have been given the opportunity to right all of the wrongs and fill in all of the gaps. It is an overwhelming feeling to want something so badly your whole life and then finally get it. I now have the chance to be the father that I always wanted to have. The day he was born, I wept with pure elation. I thought of my dad and just like every other milestone, I longed to have him there. I again wondered if he would be proud of me and proud of my son. But for the first time in my life, I could say the name John Hudson and feel joy, I could feel hope. I realized I had the opportunity to guide him in his life and tell him about my journey; something I always dreamed of having. For that, I wept. There are days that I see John and I am overcome with such emotion that I sob tears of joy. And as I stand here on the precipice of this new journey, as always, I am prepared to keep fighting. The person I am, the person I want to be, the husband I want to be, the father I want to be, have all been defined by Beirut. But as I think about John's future, I realize that collectively we all have a fight to continue. We unwisely started this journey together 30 years ago and now that new generations are being formed and new chapters are being written, we have an obligation to continue our course together. We must realize the significance of continuing to remember and to celebrate so that our journey can continue to change the lives of others. In closing, I hope that all of you in this room will make a steadfast commitment to be stewards of the BVA's cause and ensure continued participation for many years to come. My prayer is that the memory of the heroes who died in Beirut and the heroes in this room tonight will live on so that my John has the opportunity to know, remember and celebrate his grandfather and the others who served with him.

RSII

