



# The Journey

For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

ISSUE 65 ~ MARCH / APRIL 2015

“Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving.  
What you have caught on film is captured forever.”

~Aaron Siskind

**I**t is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. That afternoon at the Grand Canyon, the first lost tooth, the day you won the championship game—an image captured can freeze a moment in time and bring us back to that instant again and again.

Like so many things, when someone you love dies, photos—and the memories associated with them—can be painful to revisit. Now it’s not just the silly photo from the family reunion; it’s the last time the whole family was together, before everything changed. What once brought joy and laughter can bring a pang of grief.

Photos can be a powerful vehicle for remembering, telling stories, paying tribute, introducing your loved ones to those who they never had the chance to meet. If you find yourself focusing only on the details of your loved one’s death,

photos can help you focus again on his or her life. They are a tangible reminder of times when you were busy with the experiences of life, making memories together, and experiencing joy.

At some point you will take new pictures. You may feel sad to see images which are concrete reminders of your loved one’s absence. You might feel some guilt about making new memories and continuing to live. That’s normal. Keep taking pictures. Keep making memories. In time, you will look back on those photos and realize how far you have come. And hopefully you’ll be able to take out the old photos and be transported back to those magical moments, remembering them with more joy than sadness.

In this issue, survivors share some of their favorite photos and the stories behind them.

## Itsy Bitsy, Teenie Weenie

By Sylvia Kratzke, Mother of Heather DePaolo-Johnny (2002-CA)



**W**hen Heather was four years old, she had a red bikini. She loved that bikini. She wore it under her clothes for months, through the fall and winter, and into the next spring and summer, until she could wear it again to the shores of Lake Erie, taking it off only to allow me to wash it. I had to literally pry it off of her when it no longer offered sufficient coverage during that next summer when she was five years old.

Flash forward to January of 2002. Here she is at 28 years old, in a bikini top and red shorts, while on

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### Itsy Bitsy *continued from page 1*

vacation in Brazil at the end of fire season. She still loved red, and she still loved bikini tops.

Heather died in July 2002 while fighting the Stanza Fire in the Klamath National Forest in northern California. These pictures now hang side by side in our home, reminding us that some things never change: love of red bikinis, her happy, contented beach face, and that million dollar smile which lives in our hearts always.



### By Sabina Bebee

*Mother of Robert Bebee (2013-TX)*

**T**hank you for this opportunity to share one of my favorite snapshots of my son and my hero, Robert Bebee. This photo depicts his wonderful sense of humor. On Fill the Boot Day at his second job, Jersey Village Fire Department, he picked up this sign to pose with. His partner is J. Jones.



### By Cheryl DeAngelis

*Wife of Thomas DeAngelis (2004-PA)*

My husband, Thomas DeAngelis, of Independent Hose Company #2, Stowe Township, Pennsylvania, died on our youngest son's 5th birthday, June 23, 2004.

This is a picture of our three sons, Joseph (15), Thomas (16) and Dominic (21). This is our boys honoring their father at his grave on the ten-year anniversary of his death, June 23, 2014.

We gather at Tommy's gravesite every year for a family and friend balloon release. We write special messages on the balloons and stand there until each one is out of sight. We follow with dinner of Joseph's choice to celebrate his birthday. This year we added a shot and a beer.

Balloons \$15. Shots and beer \$40. Three young men honoring their hero...priceless!!!



### By Marci VanderGriend

*Mother of Zachary VanderGriend (2008-MT)*

**T**his is my son, Zachary, working on his '66 Beetle, which he affectionately named "Murdock," after the character in the TV series "The A Team." Zachary rebuilt this little car several times, at one point rebuilding the engine in his living room on newspapers. He was in the process of restoring his little car when this picture was taken. He never got to complete the project. The car is being restored now by firefighters who are trying to incorporate Zach's completed vision into their work.



I think this photo is probably one of my favorites! It brings so many happy memories of Zach and my dad ("Pop Pop"). I laugh every time I see it. Zach was wearing this ventilator while sandblasting the engine compartment of his bug, Murdock. "The Birth Control Glasses," as he called them, and vent were given to him by his Pop Pop.

### By Sharri Dufresne

*Life Partner of ID Rivers (2013-FL)*

**T**hese are my two favorite pictures of my firefighter. One is a personal picture, and the other crosses my personal and professional life.

The picture of ID and our dog, Buddy, was taken one night after Buddy had a chemo treatment earlier that day. Buddy was having a bad day of it, and when ID walked in the door everyone's day got a lot better. ID went to sit down, and Buddy was right there with him. In true ID fashion, he had a kiss for Buddy, and Buddy had licks for him. I'm sure when my day comes, ID will be there with his sweet smile and arms wide open, and Buddy will be right beside him ready to give licks and paws.



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Sharri Dufresne *continued from page 3*



The second picture was taken 6-8 weeks before ID passed away. We were assigned to the same fire station. He was a firefighter, and I am a fire inspector. Our fire station had received a new ladder truck, and his crew was training on it when one of the other firefighters took this picture.

ID passed away in September of 2013, and at times I cannot believe he is gone. I did not see the picture until after he passed away. When it was printed, it shows ID's reflection in the clouds overlooking our fire station. When I see him in the clouds I am sure he is still with us all, just now as our guardian angel, and every time one of our trucks rolls he is with us, keeping us safe and sound.

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### Want to Create Something Special with Your Favorite Pictures?

**H**ere are some suggestions from Nevin Steffy—son of Edward Steffy (2011-PA) and accomplished amateur photographer—about some easy-to-use photo websites and apps that can help you make the most of your photos.

If you simply want to add an effect to an existing photo, I use the app Aviary. It is very easy to use. It allows you to make color and size adjustments and to add special effects, picture frames, stickers, drawing, and various overlays. Aviary was recently taken over by Adobe. An Adobe log on is needed to unlock many of the “fancier” features of this app, but the basic ones are still free. Aviary can be used on a PC, iPad, or iPhone.

Making a photo collage is very easy to do on a computer (PC or MAC). There are numerous FREE programs out there that assist you in doing this without the messy glue! Like everything else in the computer program world, the basic

templates and software are free. If you want to make a very detailed collage with a large quantity of photos, you may have to buy the full version of the program. Below are several that I have found very straightforward to use.

**PicMonkey** (minimal cost app) or [www.picmonkey.com](http://www.picmonkey.com)

**Fotor Photo Editor** (free app) or [www.fotor.com](http://www.fotor.com)

**BeFunky Photo Editor** (free app) or [www.befunky.com](http://www.befunky.com)

If there is a photo editor app that you currently use, try to expand your use of it. Don't be afraid to explore new settings; you may be surprised at what comes about!

*Want to learn more about these and other photo tips? Nevin will be presenting two basic photography workshops at the 2015 Survivors Conference! He is always looking for new information and apps and would be happy to share what he knows.*



## Meet the Fire Heroes at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)

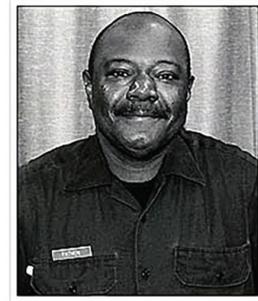
**D**o the stories you read in *The Journey* ever make you want to read more about these fallen firefighters? If so, their stories are just a few clicks away. On our website, we maintain a tribute space for each firefighter who has been honored at the National Memorial. To find a bio, go to [www.firehero.org/fallen-firefighters](http://www.firehero.org/fallen-firefighters) and search by the last name of the firefighter.

Families are invited to submit a bio and photo for their firefighter so others can read about their lives and service. If your firefighter has already been honored at the National Memorial and this information was not submitted, please e-mail a bio and photo to [webteam@firehero.org](mailto:webteam@firehero.org), so we can post them on your firefighter's page. Help us share the stories of America's brave fire service heroes!

*Here is an example of a completed tribute page.*

### Walter Patmon Jr.

- Firefighter
- Chicago Fire Department
- Illinois
- Age: 61
- Year of Death: 2012



Walter Patmon Jr. was born February 17, 1951, in Chicago, Illinois, to Walter Sr. and Annie V. Patmon. He was the second of three children, between Joe Williams, the oldest, and Mary Ann Patmon, the youngest. Walter was very close and loving with his siblings.

Walter confessed a hope in Christ at an early age, and his faith guided him.

While attending Oglesby Elementary School on the south side of Chicago, Walter met and befriended a group of young men who formed a brotherhood which lasted half a century. Because of his portly physique and great sense of humor, the guys nicknamed him 'Bubble.'

Walter graduated from Calumet High School in 1969. Shortly thereafter, he went on to become an employee at Michael Reese Hospital, where he was first a page that carried patients all over the hospital. Then he worked in the mail room delivering mail.

Walter met his wife, Diane, at Michael Reese Hospital. The couple married, and in this union three daughters were born. Walter was a committed and conscientious husband and father. There was always a lot of laughter and fun in our house. Walter was also a long distance truck driver for North American Van Lines, and later operated a concrete truck for Material Service.

## For Firefighters Being Honored During the 2015 Memorial Weekend

If your firefighter will be honored in 2015, please follow these specific instructions for sending bios and photos.

### BIO

Should be 450 words or less and will be edited as necessary. Please save the bio in Microsoft Word format or just write it in the body of an e-mail. E-mail bio to [jwoodall@firehero.org](mailto:jwoodall@firehero.org).

### PHOTO

Should be a clear, close-up (head and shoulders) shot of the firefighter, 4x6 inches or larger

#### To send an electronic image (preferred):

- Save in jpg or tif format, at 300 dpi
- Name the file using the full name of your firefighter (ie. John K. Smith).

- Do not edit or crop the photograph from the original; we will do that if necessary.
- E-mail the image to [jwoodall@firehero.org](mailto:jwoodall@firehero.org).

#### To send a photograph by mail:

- Do not send your only copy. Have a copy made from an original photograph.
- Write your firefighter's full name and your name on the back of the photo in pencil.
- Package the photo so it will not be damaged in the mail.
- Mail to:  
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation  
Attn: Jenny Woodall  
P.O. Drawer 498  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727



**BJA**  
Bureau of Justice Assistance  
U.S. Department of Justice

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Programs are a unique partnership effort of the PSOB Office, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice and local, state, and federal public safety agencies and national organizations, such as the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, to provide death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the Programs.

**Toll-free: 1-888-744-6513**

## 2015 Hal Bruno Camps for Children of Fallen Firefighters

It's time to sign up children for 2015 Hal Bruno Camps! Children of firefighters who have been honored or are approved to be honored in 2015 at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland, are eligible to attend.

Applications are now open for two different camps:

### **Hal Bruno/Comfort Zone Camp, Ages 7-17**

Camp Chinqueka in Bantam, Connecticut

June 12 - 14, 2015

*Applications open until May 8, 2015*

### **Hal Bruno Camp**

**Ages 4-6, with a parent or guardian**

CoCo Key Water Resort in Orlando, Florida

July 30 - August 2, 2015

*Applications open until June 26, 2015*

If you need an invitation package, want to talk with a family who has previously attended camp, or have questions, please contact Bev Donlon at [bdonlon@firehero.org](mailto:bdonlon@firehero.org) or (301) 447-1603.

## *We want to hear from you!*



For some people, creativity provides a great outlet for dealing with grief and emotion. There is also evidence that learning new creative skills helps people recover from the effects of grief and trauma. Have you used your creative talents or learned something brand new since the death of your loved one? Tell us about how creativity—painting, music, theater, woodworking, needlework, ceramics, writing—has played a part in your journey.

Please send your submission, along with a photo, by May 31 to:

[jwoodall@firehero.org](mailto:jwoodall@firehero.org) (preferred) or

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Attn: Jenny Woodall

P.O. Drawer 498

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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