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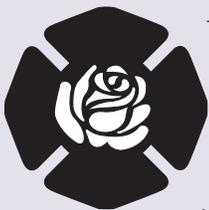
Want to read more on this topic? Survivors of fallen firefighters can borrow these and other materials free of charge from the Foundation's Lending Library.

- *Death of a Parent: Transition to a New Adult Identity* by Debra Umberson
- *FatherLoss: How Sons of All Ages Come to Terms with the Deaths of Their Dads* by Neil Chethik
- *How to Survive the Loss of a Parent: A Guide for Adults* by Lois Akner, C.S.W.
- *On Grieving the Death of a Father* by Harold Ivan Smith
- *The Orphaned Adult* by Alexander Levy

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We want to hear from you...



They say a picture is worth a thousand words. When someone dies, dividing our life into "before" and "after," those snapshots become precious images from life "before." Send us a copy of your favorite photo of your firefighter. And tell us the story behind the photo. We look forward to featuring your story in an upcoming

issue of *The Journey*. Send photos and stories by December 10, to Jenny Woodall at:

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This project was supported by Grant No. 2012-PS-DX-0001, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



The Journey

For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

ISSUE 62 ~ SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2014

The power we exert over the future behavior of our children is enormous. Even after they have left home, even after we have left the world, there will always be part of us that will remain with them forever.

~Neil Kurshan

The parent-child relationship is one of the pivotal relationships in our lives. Legally, a child may become an adult at age 18. Anyone who has been 18 or raised a child to that age knows that growing up is a gradual process. Well beyond that magical date, parents continue to be a primary influence in the lives of their children. Even while grown children are establishing independent lives, they rely on their parents as a source of stability and strength.

So what happens when your parent dies after you're all grown up? How do you balance the gratitude of having your parent with you for so many years, with the sadness of losing one of the most important people in your life? What kind of support is available to adults who have lost a parent? How do you carry their influence with you? In this issue, adult children share their thoughts.

By Lanett Stewart, Daughter of Ronald Stephan (2010-IN)

When my dad suffered a heart attack and died in the line of duty in September 2010, I was obviously heartbroken. My friends and family were incredibly supportive, but I couldn't help but feel a little lost without him. He was my biggest cheerleader, my silent protector, the man who could fix absolutely everything. He was my NASCAR buddy. Life would not be the same.

After only seven days I was headed back to reality, almost two hours away from my family with nothing but my thoughts, which included the constant fear of forgetting the very sound of his voice. I could feel my friends and colleagues encouraging me to find my old routine again. I was, after all, an adult. I was old enough to process pain like this, reason through it, and find ways to deal with all of the crazy emotions. At least that's what I thought and sensed I

was supposed to do. People made comments such as, "He would want you to be happy and go on with your life." or "You were so lucky to have him for 36 years." And while those comments were true, what about the next 30 years? I wanted him here for those, too.



Ronald Stephan with granddaughters
Kaibre and Morgan

Grief is devastating regardless of our age. Whether we're 6 or 36, we still experience feelings of worry, pain, and even anger after losing someone close to us. Unfortunately, as adults we are often expected to pick ourselves up and carry on sooner than our bodies and minds are ready. Our kids and family members need and depend on us at home, and our jobs only allow so much time away. We often choose to tuck away those painful feelings and tell ourselves, "I'll handle it later." Or worse yet, "I'm just fine."

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I am 40 years old, and it's been almost four years since Dad passed away. I still struggle to listen to certain songs. I still struggle during basketball season. And there's not a race I watch when I don't wish I could call and talk to him about where our favorite drivers qualified. The pain of losing him feels as great to me today as it did the day I learned of his death. BUT, thankfully, that pain does not define me.

I was blessed to meet some amazing people following my dad's death. Supporting Heroes, a non-profit organization that responds to line-of-duty deaths, came to my family's aid when he died. They helped us to see that we were not alone. It was during one of their events that I recognized how much I needed other survivors in my life. As we sat at the table making small talk, someone bravely asked, "Who is your hero?" Within minutes, we all began to share details about our loved ones—happy stories, funny stories, crazy stories, things that, until that point, were only shared with our immediate families. That is when I realized those survivors sitting right next to me were struggling, too.

As the event continued so did our stories, as well as a few tears. This time they were tears of joy and celebration. Finally, I GOT IT. I spent months trying to manage my emotions and fears alone because "I was an adult." I thought no one else could relate to my pain. I couldn't have been more wrong. There were people all over the country who felt exactly like I felt, and that night I finally realized how much we needed each other. I made a promise to myself. I vowed to do more than just attend events. I would get involved. If I felt that alone, someone else probably did also, and maybe I could help.

Thankfully, God stepped in and nudged me in the right direction. Initially, I chose to volunteer. But eventually I realized I wanted to do more. And while life changes are never simple, I knew it was time to listen and follow my heart.

I took a leap of faith and left my career in education, with plans to pursue a career in counseling. That's when God opened a slightly different door. The day I left the field of education, I received an email regarding a volunteer activity from Supporting Heroes. As I responded to the email, I explained my plans to pursue a counseling degree in hopes that other volunteer opportunities might be possible. After many phone conversations, prayers and deliberation, I actually joined their staff as an employee. I learned very quickly that sometimes we just need to relax and let God lead the way.

I would never have guessed that the most painful years of my life would lead me to such a rewarding career. Those incredibly painful trials forced me to find the strength to survive and succeed. And because of that, I encourage you to be present not only during the good days, but during the ugly ones as well. Allow yourself the opportunity to grieve, and then be open to learn from that pain. It's OK to feel sad. Share your experiences. Trust me, someone will benefit from hearing your story and how you survived.

I have found great peace in knowing that my dad led me to this place and that his death will result in something positive for someone else. Was it painful? Yes. Do I miss him? Yes. BUT I can say without hesitation that, because of him, I've found my passion. That is truly a blessing.

By Steve Tullis, Son of Arthur "Bucky" Tullis (1999-IL)

Growing up the as the son of a fire chief was pretty awesome. My two older brothers and I spent more time in the fire house some weekends than we did in our own house, and we got to do things most kids only dreamed of doing—long rides in the fire truck, climbing on everything, and chasing the fire engine to calls.

My dad worked two jobs his whole life, coached our sports teams, attended our after school activities, and was involved in our lives every step in every sense of the word. My oldest brother Rob summed it up pretty good at my

dad's funeral. He said that you see your father in three stages of your life, and each one is profoundly different. In the first stage, as a young child, you see your dad as Superman, especially if he is a firefighter.

Everyone knew our dad, and we all benefitted from it—like getting out of an occasional speeding ticket. Of all the lessons in life that he tried to teach us, one sticks out the most. He used to tell us, "The only thing you have in this world is your name. Your reputation will make or break you. No matter how successful you will become, or how much fame, fortune, or



misfortune you will have, your name will say it all. So serve it well, and it will serve you.”

The other lesson in life he tried to impose on us was making your bed every day. If you failed an exam, crashed the car, got cut from the team or dumped by a girlfriend, he would say, “It all stems from making your bed.” As if somehow making your bed every morning had some magical properties that were tied to the success or failure of each day. The last one, which was probably the most difficult to comply with, was taking care of your stuff—which meant his stuff. Tools were to be put back in exactly the same place as they were found, cars cleaned and filled with gas if they were borrowed. Everything had a label on it in our house. Put tools back. Turn off lights. Thank you for not smoking. Clean up after dog.

As you can well imagine, during my teenage and young adult life these “my way or the highway” rules of the house were met with selective compliance. I was seeing my dad in the second stage of my life. He was no longer Superman. He was a super pain in my neck.

My dad, Chief Arthur "Bucky" Tullis, of the LaGrange Park Fire Department died in the line of duty on May 4, 1999. He was in command at an activated fire alarm in town—an otherwise routine call on a typical day in our profession.



Arthur "Bucky" Tullis



Steve Tullis

There was no fire to put out, no rescue to be made, no critical situation to overcome. I was 27 years old.

During his wake, several hundred people came and paid their respects for my dad. My family and I stood there for hours listening to people tell stories about him. Stories about how he had helped people learn to read, pay off a debt, drive a car, help a sick or injured child, coach a baseball team, mentor a peer. The list goes on and on. I had no idea the kind of person my dad really was—not so much as a firefighter, but as a man...the best of men.

My life changed that day. I learned that the positive influence of one person can have such a tremendous impact on so many people in such a powerful way. That random acts of kindness can shape our lives and those around us more completely than brief moments of glory. Now that I have children of my own, and see how incredibly difficult it is to raise three boys, hold down two jobs, pay the mortgage, coach teams, and fulfill all of the awesome responsibilities of being a parent, I finally see my dad in the third stage of my life. He really was a super man. Even today, some 15 years after his passing, I find myself passing on the all important lessons in life he taught me to my three boys—especially the ones I resented the most.

By Steven Young, Son of Frank Young (1996-VA)

It has been over 18 years since March 18, 1996, the day when my dad's life was taken away by fire and debris. It would prove to be the beginning of a long healing process. On that day when I came home from high school, I heard a report on Dad's fire scanner that a crane was needed at a scene. I ran upstairs and grabbed my fire pager and read of a 4th alarm plus fire working at an auto parts store in Chesapeake, Virginia. Later pages read out that there were two firefighter DOAs. I had a feeling that Dad was in trouble. So as a high school fire volunteer, I grabbed my turnout gear and rushed to the incident. I was hoping to

help out where I could, to work alongside my dad. But he was one of two firefighters killed. Finding this out was so painful to me. The shock I felt is not easy to explain. I just remember feeling drained. My Hero was in my life for over 18 years. To this day, I miss him very much.

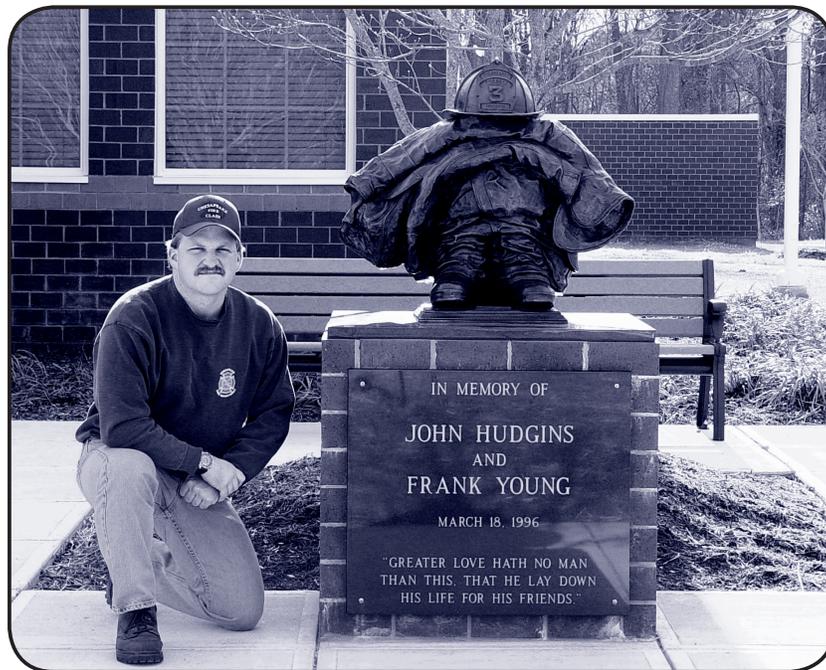
In 1978, my Dad joined the Toms River (New Jersey) Fire Department. There he became a rescue diver and firefighter and had a career with the New Jersey Forest Fire Service. In 1981, Dad traveled down the East Coast to apply with

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several career fire departments in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. Dad tested out and was hired by the Chesapeake (Virginia) Fire Department. Around this time, Dad became interested in fireground and fire apparatus photography. I remember well when Dad would come home from a 24-hour shift and tell of all his action while on duty. He truly loved his new career. Dad had a large collection of fire department patches, mugs, and other firematic items. He traveled to other cities and visited their firehouses. Each year Dad would travel to Philadelphia and Baltimore for the Firehouse Expo. One of the earliest fire department trips I can remember taking with him was to Washington, DC, in 1983 for the National Firefighters Parade. Of course, I had a blast.

Dad loved everything and anything connected to the fire service. By 1984, he joined a newly formed hazardous materials team for the C.F.D., and later became a hazardous

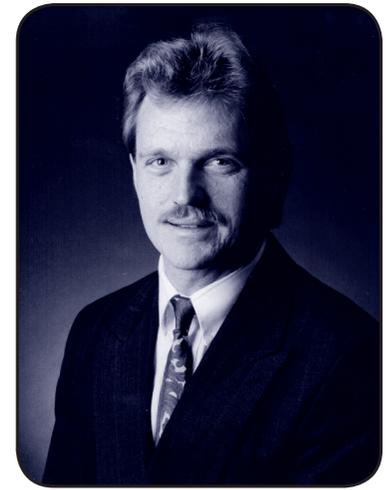


Steven Young at Station 3 Memorial

materials specialist. By 1985, he became a member of the International Fire Photographers Association, an organization of likeminded photographers and buffs. I loved going to fire calls with him to photograph the action.

By 1986, Dad became certified as a paramedic, giving him the ability to give better patient care. He rode both a fire truck and an ambulance in his career. He held the rank of firefighter specialist, and throughout his career

he would act as a lieutenant when his fire officer was off. Around 1991, he started a local fire photography club known as the Tidewater Fire Photographers Association. They traveled around the nation to videotape and photograph their men and women in action. I always found it fascinating that Dad's vacations were to ride along with other fire departments.



Frank Young

Dad loved the fire service and helping others. He had over 18 years of experience in the field by the age of 38 and had received training in firefighter, paramedic, hazmat, dive rescue, technical rescue, and fire photography.

On Monday, March 18, 1996, his career would be cut short when assigned to Engine Company 3 on a swing shift. On this morning after 11 a.m., Dad was dispatched to an electrical box, which was sparking as the result of a power company employee accidentally snagging the power line of a commercial auto parts structure. The truck's boom wasn't secured in the locked position when driving away, causing the bucket to rise. This caused several small fires in the void space and throughout the lightweight wood truss constructed roof. As a result, two firefighters were killed. The two were found together. This incident brought back a memory for me after the fire. Dad and I had gone to see the movie "Backdraft." Afterward, Dad asked me about the famous saying in the movie--"You Go, We Go."

For the past 36 years, the fire department has been a big part of my life. To this day, I will visit my Dad's firehouse and crew of Engine Company 4, where he normally was assigned. I love having dinner with the crew. Most of Dad's coworkers have retired, and with the newer generation of Chesapeake firefighters there now, I take great pride in passing on the story of my Hero. I am proud to be in a firefighting family.



Laying It Bare: An Adult-Child, Inner Turmoil & Peace

By Laurie Anderson, Daughter of Gary Tilton (2004-TX)

What would be your first thoughts at the mention of a fire service survivor? I'd be willing to bet in most instances it would be of the spouse or the small children or maybe even the parents. Rarely would it be of the children that are already adults. Losing a parent as an adult is supposed to be a part of the natural progression of life. The natural progression of life, however, does not include losing your parent in a line-of-duty death and all that comes with it.

As an adult-child I was blessed to have my dad around for the first 36 years of my life. He was there when I was 4 to show me how to build a snowman (a rarity around Houston). He was there for my 9th birthday to give me my first cowboy hat. He was there when I was a pre-teen to instill a love and respect for the Lone Star State. He was there to buy me my first pair of Justin Roper cowboy boots. He was the proud father of a "band geek" and a feature twirler (baton twirling). He and his camera never missed a game! He was also there to intimidate any boy who was brave enough to ask me out. He was there for my prom and my high school graduation. He was there to move me into my dorm room for my first semester of college. He was there to watch me walk across the stage for that piece of paper known as a college degree. He was there to walk me down the aisle. He was there when I bought my first house—a real fixer-upper. The first 18 years of my life he was the authoritative father; for the next 18 he also became my friend! When he died, I not only lost a father, I lost a friend.

As I sat in the ER after being told Daddy had died, I shifted into auto-pilot. By nature, I am an organizer and a caretaker. There were so many things that would need to be done. I did not have any siblings, so it was just me and Moma. I felt it was now my responsibility to protect her and take as much burden away as I could. I hovered around her, not wanting to be out of contact with her for very long. I told her it was okay for us to fall apart; we just couldn't

do it at the same time. As the days passed, we took turns crying and grieving. She would cry and grieve; I would be strong and comforting. I would cry and grieve; she would be strong and comforting.

Over the years, I have struggled with survivor's guilt. When I think of other survivors who've lost their dads as children and teenagers, I feel guilty that I had 36 years with mine.



Gary Tilton with his daughter Laurie

I feel guilty for all of the things in my life he was there to share, while theirs weren't. When I think of my non-fire service friends who have lost a parent, I feel guilty that they aren't remembered and honored to the extent mine is. I have felt guilty for feeling forgotten, invisible, or like an afterthought as an adult-child. It isn't about wanting a "pity party." It is simply about an acknowledgement that my firefighter, who just happened to be my parent, left me behind, too.

I live in the shadow of my firefighter. It is always with me. Most of the time, I feel safe and find comfort in it. Other times it is dark, lonely, and I grieve. Walking beside it or walking under it, either way I am at peace. I do not try to compete with it—that would just be futile and would leave me frustrated and exhausted. I find peace in knowing that he died honorably and doing what he loved.

October 20, 2014, is the 10th anniversary of my father's death. It's hard to believe it's already been that long, as some days it feels just like yesterday. One of the best pieces of advice I received at the time of Daddy's death was to just ride the waves of emotions. I still allow myself to ride an emotion as it runs its course. Life never stays the same. It is always changing, always ebbing and flowing. His death set my life on a trajectory that I never saw coming. As a result, my life today is vastly different from what it was when he died. I had no idea that his death would orchestrate a chain of events that would change my life forever and would seem as if he was making sure that I was taken care of, too. That brings me peace!

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