

I MISS HIM MOST ON THE HOLIDAYS

By: SSG Miguel Alamo

USAG Ansbach 2015 Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month Essay & Poetry Contest

It has been 14 years since the incident and a day hasn't gone by that I haven't felt my loss. To some he was a friend, to others he was a brother, an uncle, a neighbor but to me he was my dad. Respected and loved by many, worshipped and adored by his children.

He may not have been the best dad in the world but he was my dad. I won't go into much detail of the events that brought my father to his decision to end his life, in reality I don't truly know them myself. The most important fact is that he is gone and I can never have him back.

There were signs, and they were well reported and documented but in the end the torment in my father's mind convinced him that suicide was his only option. It wasn't, and as his children we fought hard to get him the help he needed but his depression repelled our best efforts and his mental ailments overcame.

My father was a great man who could overcome most obstacles, he was hard working, responsible and a very dedicated man. He wasn't good at a lot of things but he was great at being a dad. He taught us morals and values and how to be responsible. He taught us about honesty, fairness and integrity. He also taught us how to celebrate life.

The holidays however was his time to shine, it seemed that we always had the biggest turkey, and the brightest pumpkin and the largest Christmas tree. The holidays always brought us closer and it reaffirmed the love that we shared as a family.

His death came as a shock and occurred days from my birthday 2001, since then, my birthday isn't all that special: the turkeys, the pumpkins, the Christmas trees don't quite have the same effect. I have had two sons, my brother three, all four of us have wed and have started our lives with additions to the family. My father didn't live long enough to share in those moments.

It's very difficult sometimes to celebrate and rejoice at those 'Special times of the year moments' my wife and I do the best we can for our sons. My siblings drive on as well. There are still many nights that my dreams awaken me to tears at not having my dad, having 14 years' worth of special moments and not having him around to share them is devastating. To know he has five grandchildren who he has never met as we talked for years about what a great grandfather he would make some day. Knowing that he took his life when that wasn't his only or his best option it all takes a toll.

His loss has brought my siblings together and we are more vigilant to each other's emotions, it has spawned awareness for us as we cautiously watch those around us we try to share the fact that the person who commits or ties to commit suicide is not the only victim, that behind are left others that will have a void in their lives. That

the ones left behind will suffer emotional wounds. They say that, "Time heals all wounds" I say that after 14 years the pain has not gotten any easier, that my mind and my heart have not forgotten. That our loss has caused moments of emotional instability and that I love him just as much as ever.

I hope this message serves to benefit a/or person(s) that may be considering suicide or for someone that is a living survivor of a loved one or a friend that has tried or has committed suicide. I have come to terms that I can never forget this tragedy and I am good with that because I have had to learn to take the good with the bad. I am not better because of my father's death. I am however, more human. I have learned to care more for others. My father's death was definitely the bad (actually the worse) and the good was his life and the life he gave me and the strength we have had to draw from each other as a family to overcome this tragic and senseless loss. It has brought us closer and made us appreciate the time we do have together.

I could write a book on what his loss means, what his life meant and what this tragedy took but I don't want my message to get lost. Suicide is not a solution, that pain follows it for years to come and that the number of victims from the incident grows, not diminishes as time passes. My children will never know their grandfather if not through the eyes and stories of other, their loss is to never have been held by the hands that held me, he won't teach them to swim or fish, how to box or work on cars he won't be at their graduations or weddings...he won't be...

I miss my dad every day, I think of him every day, but at those special moments of the year that we get together to celebrate life with some funny or quirky tradition, whether it be chocolate shaped hearts, vividly colored eggs, cookies for Santa or hay for the camels of the Three Wise Men, I tell you, "I miss him most on the holidays."