

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT WILLIAM J. WOITOWICZ, U.S.M.C.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, on June 7, 2011, Groton, the State of Massachusetts, and our country lost a brave young man who gave his life defending the Nation he loved. Sergeant William "Billy" Woitowicz died serving with the U.S. Marine Corps in Afghanistan, fighting as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

In the difficult days that followed this awful news, the entire Groton community came together to show their support for his family and to remember Billy's dedication and selflessness. Joe Moore, a family friend, described Bill movingly in a tribute that was itself an act of great devotion. I ask that it be printed in the RECORD so that all of us can reflect on the sacrifice of a courageous marine tragically lost much too soon in service to a grateful nation.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EULOGY FOR SERGEANT WILLIAM J. WOITOWICZ
(Delivered by Joseph F. Moore)

Before I begin, I would like to read the statement I prepared for the media on behalf of the Woitowicz family this past Tuesday. It did not make its way to the individuals and communities that poured love from their hearts for Billy and his family.

On behalf of the Woitowicz family, I would like to thank everyone for their heartfelt condolences, the kind words, the outpouring of emotion, gifts of food, offers of help, cards, and prayers. I can't tell you how much that has meant to my friends. They appreciate your kindness very much.

They would also like to thank the Marines for the tremendous support of their family and the respect they've shown Billy in the way they have treated him as they've brought him home. My father was a Marine during World War II and I've always had a tremendous respect for the Corps. The actions of these Marines, in the way they've treated my friends, especially Sergeant Owens, only enhances that admiration.

If I could pause for a moment—Would you please stand and join me in a round of applause for the United States Marine Corps, and the Marines joining us today to honor their fallen comrade, to show them how much we appreciate the sacrifices they make for us?

Billy was a wonderful person. You only need to see the flags lining the streets of Groton and Westford, the messages of love, the swollen eyes, to see how people cared about him. It is because he cared for them—that was Billy, always more interested and concerned for you than he was for himself.

Although we mourn for Billy and our hearts ache for the loss of him, we know there is a celebration in heaven for the return of one of God's favorite sons and soldiers.

I am pleased to announce the Groton Dunstable Youth Basketball League, which I have great pride in saying I served for 15 years, has named their 3-on-3-basketball tournament after Billy. Thanks so much to the Board members; this means a lot to the Woitowicz family and to me.

Our State Representative Sheila Harrington is spearheading a movement to cre-

ate the Sergeant William J. Woitowicz Memorial Trust. The trust will fund a scholarship named after Billy and other activities chosen by the family. Thank you, Sheila. We appreciate your efforts.

Billy's second mother, my wife Karen, said, "For a kid who didn't like attention, he sure drummed up a lot of it."

Billy, did you see us on the tarmac waiting for you to come home?

Did you see the respect of your fellow Marines as they gently held you?

Did you see the people standing in honor as we drove through Hanscom?

Did you see Mr. Clickner with tears in his eyes holding a basketball?

Did you see the gentleman, also a Marine, at the exit with the sign that read, "Thank you Corporal Woitowicz, I try to be worth dying for."

Did you see the cherry pickers with American flags flowing down from them at the rotary?

Did you see the fire trucks from Acton and Maynard, Boxboro and Littleton, parked on the overpass, with their ladders extended and connected in a salute of honor, and the firemen standing on top of their trucks?

Did you see people who simply stopped by the procession and got out of their cars with their hands over their hearts?

Did you see along the route you traveled, the rescue squads, state police, sheriffs, and the police and firemen from Lexington, Concord, Acton, Watertown, Melrose, Medford, Lowell, Maynard, Boxboro, Lancaster, Littleton, Harvard, Ayer, Dunstable, Groton, and Westford?

Did you see the older veterans, in their uniforms, standing at salute?

Did you see the people pouring out of their offices as your procession passed by?

Did you see the elderly gray-haired woman, standing by herself in Harvard, holding an American flag?

Did you see the lines of people in bordering towns with genuine looks of anguish?

Did you see the rows of people on Main Street in Groton? And did you notice they were patiently waiting when we returned from the high school to honor you twice?

Did you see the Groton-Dunstable High School administrators, teachers, and students in respectful alignment? The students were proud to attend the same high school as you.

Did you see that we stopped at Orr Road, to pay tribute to where you grew up?

Did you see the fire trucks from Groton and Westford, your two home towns, with their ladders outstretched over 225, forming a gateway for your return?

Did you see the people in Forge Village, waiting patiently for you?

Did you see the little kids of Norman E. Day Elementary School saluting and waving?

Did you see the people holding flags in front of St. Catherine's?

Did you know your friend Kelly was going to give up her vacation to drive back from California because she loves you so much?

Kevin and Rose, and my wife Karen and I have seven children. Their children are ours and ours, theirs. Just as I know Kevin and Rose love our kids, we love Chris, Bill, and Mandy as our own. Billy was like a son and, for reasons that I never completely understood he seemed to be attached to me. Rose and Karen would often say, "Billy really likes talking to you. He looks up to you, Joe. Talk to him." And when my dearest friend Rosemary asked me to do this eulogy, Karen said, when I hung up the phone, "He loved talking to you. You should to do it. Share how much we all love him, respect him, and how much we now miss him."

Please bear with me as I give honor, through this eulogy, to my friend and hero,

Sergeant William J. Woitowicz, USMC. It is a great privilege that you have bestowed on me, Kevin and Rose. Thank you.

At the same time that I was saying yes to Rose, I was wondering how I would ever get through this without breaking down. I knew I couldn't, but nothing could ever keep me from it, not even the fear of losing my composure in front of all of you, once my friends Kevin and Rose asked me to do this for them.

Do me a favor. In the minutes that it might take me to recover, please raise your eyes to heaven and look for Billy's smiling face. And while you focus on him, pray for his mom and dad, and his brother and sister. I would ask that you to pray for Bill but I know he is in a better place, happy to be home. Even if he did need our prayers, it would be the preference of our unselfish Bill that you turn your thoughts not to him but to his family.

And please get comfortable, as this might take longer than one of Father Peter's sermons. We sometimes pack a lunch for the 11:00 Mass when we know he is preaching.

Speaking of Father Peter, some of you may not know that prior to being a parish priest, he was at a monastery for which he had to take a vow of silence. He was only allowed to say two words every seven years. After the first seven years the elders called him in and asked for his two words. "Cold floors," he said. The elders nodded and sent him away. Seven more years passed. They brought him back in and asked for his two words. He cleared his throat. "Bad food," he said. They nodded and sent him away. Seven more years passed. They brought him in for his two words. "I quit," he said. "That's not surprising," the elders said. "You've done nothing but complain since you got here."

You might think it inappropriate to begin this eulogy with a joke, but it is exactly what Bill would have wanted. There is not a doubt in my mind that Billy is saying right now, "Way to go, Mr. Moore." That happens to be one of his favorite expressions. I will try to paint a picture of Billy to help you understand why this is so.

In 1996, Karen and I moved our family from Allentown, Pennsylvania, to Groton. We were building a new house and it was not completed before the start of the school year so we crammed into a suite at the Westford Regency Hotel for six weeks. Prior to trekking to Groton, we had signed our kids up for soccer, and on our first Saturday as New Englanders we drove our kids to a match held behind St. Anne's Church in Littleton. As fate would have it, Chris, Billy, and our son Mike were all on the same team.

We knew no one in the area and Karen was determined to find a doctor for our kids. She happened to approach Rosemary on the sideline—she liked how Rose was cheering so loudly for her kids—and, as Rosie would, she went out of her way to be helpful to Karen. As they spoke, they connected partly because our kids went to Catholic schools. Let me interject here that Karen and Rose have not stopped talking since that day—literally, just ask our kids. Also while they chatted our daughters Jenny and Mandy struck up a friendship and, although they don't burn through their cell phone minutes talking like their mothers do, they have remained best friends.

The mothers figured out during their discussion that we lived near each other and Rose told us that she knew a short cut. We were headed to see how our house was coming along so we followed them home and pulled up to thank Rose for her help. It was then that we saw our first glimpse of Billy's tremendous charisma. Before we pulled away, little eight-year-old Bill looked at us and said, "Do you want to come in for coffee? My mom made muffins." He then

glanced at his mother as if to say, "Come on, of course we were going to invite them in—right, mom?"

The rest, as they say, is history. Our older boys also became best friends. Drew became the younger brother to all of the kids and they each had a hand in raising him. Kevin and myself and even our dogs, Freckles and Maya, became friends. They all grew up together as our families intertwined.

When Billy decided to become a Marine, his parents, of course, tried to talk him out of it. So did many others. No one could change his mind. Finally, Rosemary asked me to talk to Bill about his decision. She told me that he seemed so committed, and that it was so very important to him that I shouldn't try to talk him out of it. But, even though she wanted him to follow his dream, she was hoping I could convince him to change his mind. I tried but failed. He listened—looking off into a place I could not see—patiently and politely. We ended our conversation with Bill telling me, "Don't worry Mr. Moore, everything will be okay." Billy had made his decision and no one could change it.

On other occasions when I talked to Bill about things that might be troubling him, he would listen intently but I always sensed that he had figured out his own answer. He would masterfully turn our conversations and I would walk away feeling as though it was he who had lectured me. And, as if he sensed my thoughts, he would give me his standard but heartfelt response, "Don't worry Mr. Moore, everything's okay."

Part of the connection Bill had with me, I believe, was that my father was also a Marine. He was a proud member of the First Marines and fought in World War II. He was at Guadalcanal, the first victory for America in the Pacific after suffering so many horrific losses. He fought at Peleliu, which had the highest percentage casualty rate of any battle in the Pacific, called, by some, the bitterest battle of the war for the Marines.

Bill constantly asked me questions about my dad and wanted me to tell him the stories I knew about his war experiences. He listened, riveted, as I told him that of the 200-plus men in my father's unit on Peleliu, only 27 returned unharmed. His face wore a look of reverence as I told him my father watched his closest friend, Sandy, die in front of him.

He loved to look at dad's medals, dog tags, and his old green-covered book about the First Marines, *The Old Guard*. The two of us watched a black-and-white video together that my father had given me about the battle of Peleliu—Bill could not take his eyes off of the television screen. Then again, when the mini-series "The Pacific" was released, I sat with Bill in our basement watching as it amazingly replayed the exact stories that I had told Bill about my father, including a scene where the soldier on whose life it was based, on leave in Australia, slept—just as my dad had—with other wounded and fatigued soldiers in a soccer stadium where the bleachers had been removed and replaced by cots. It also chronicled many of the horrific battle scenes. Bill, who could never sit still, did not move a muscle.

On several occasions Billy said to me, "I hope I will make your dad proud, Mr. Moore." And, just prior to leaving for Afghanistan, he asked me, "Do you think your dad will be proud of me, Mr. Moore?" I told him, "Billy, my dad is already proud of you."

I would like to share an email that Bill sent me this past April from Afghanistan. It will give you a good sense of his character, his humor, and what was important to him.

mr moore,
glad to hear from you . . . just headed off to bed, going to be a long day tomorrow—and

my pack is starting to get heavy—as the afghans say in their broken English noooooooo goooooooy hahah. its been warm and rainy the last two days. i wonder what your dad would think of this war. probably a cake walk compared to WWII; but all i can do is try and make him proud. i bet he's watching down on all marines up there in heaven with a big smile on his face every time we have success. cant wait to be back home and have a relaxing day by the moore pool after a good game of bball. hope works been great and everyone's been staying out of trouble—i know its probably hard for drew this day in age haha. anyways tell the whole family i said hi, and tell matt to catch up with me on email—i called and left a message on his phone the other day. my beards nice and thick and the hair is nice and long (im trying to give ole tom brady a run for his money haha) ill keep in touch but write soon and often. its funny, last year for my 22nd bday i was in the middle of losing 20lbs being chased by dogs in the woods, now im turning 23 and being chased by dogs in afghanistan haha . . . wouldn't want it any other way

love,

Bill

This is a list of the Marine Core Leadership Traits. Reading them, a vision of the man that Billy became appears:

Dependability
Bearing
Courage
Decisiveness
Endurance
Enthusiasm
Initiative
Integrity
Judgment
Justice
Knowledge
Tact
Unselfishness
Loyalty

Certainly, these are all words that describe Bill.

To quote Albert Einstein, "Life is not worth living unless you live it for someone else." Joining the Marines was an unselfish act, and a decision Bill made with certainty. Bill was not just a Marine, but part of MARSOC, or United States Marine Corps Special Operations Command—think Navy Seals on steroids.

Its core objectives are to direct action, special reconnaissance, and foreign internal defense. MARSOC has also been directed to conduct counter-terrorism, information operations, and unconventional warfare. MARSOC comprises roughly 2,500 Marines. About 30% of those that attempt make it through. If the Marines are the best of the best, MARSOC is the best—of the best of the best. Kevin told me that when Bill said he had to re-enlist to complete MARSOC, he started to tell Bill all the reasons he might want to reconsider. Frustrated, Bill finally told his dad he didn't need a "Plan B" because he would not fail. He was right. Billy also was one of only 1% of all Marines with a perfect score on the required physical fitness test.

Some of you may not know that Bill volunteered to go to Afghanistan ahead of his own unit. As a matter of fact, they are still here in the United States. Due to an injury to a soldier that had to return, there was a position open and Bill volunteered to go early, ahead of his unit. That was Bill, anxious to get going and positive he would make an impact.

The following is a note sent to Mandy from one of Billy's fellow Marines.

I worked with your brother in Miramar and I was the Sergeant in charge of the division that he was assigned to. I like to think I taught him most of what he knew as a com-

puter repair tech at his first duty station. I was grief stricken to hear of his passing but please know that for a Marine as dedicated to the Corps as your brother, there is no more honorable way to leave us. I wish the best for you and your family and am truly sorry for this tragic loss.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Sypole

One Christmas Billy gave me a Marine flag as a present. If it hasn't yet come through clearly to you, Bill loved and dedicated himself completely to the Corp. Bill, like my dad, passed away from us taking his fierce pride in being a Marine with him.

I believe we live our earthly lives simultaneously on two planes, the physical and the spiritual. In the ongoing struggle to overcome the physical and live more in the spiritual, there are a few saints and mystics who succeed. Advanced souls like Saint Thomas Aquinas, Padre Pio, and Mother Teresa, to name a few, are on Earth to help others rather than live for themselves. Some fail miserably, succumbing to the earthly pull. Most of us live our lives somewhere in between. I believe Billy, like the saints and mystics, was one of the more advanced souls, one that influenced others even if they were not aware. When you looked into his eyes, it seemed like he understood things that the rest of us couldn't comprehend.

C. S. Lewis said, "You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body." Not many of us fully grasp this concept while here on Earth, but I believe our Billy did. He knew that this was just a temporary parking place for his soul; his real home is in heaven. I think that is why he was so impatient, why he couldn't sit still. Just maybe he was anxious to get back where his vibrant, loving soul belonged. Why he was with us for so short a time.

On the physical plane, Billy certainly had faults, like the rest of us. But, as we know, even the Apostles Jesus selected weren't perfect. I think Billy was a lot like St. Peter—a bit impulsive, temperamental, impatient, and blindly loyal. Most of you never saw that side of him, but it was there. Far outweighing it, however, was his other side, loving and caring, unselfish and kind, and extremely loyal—he was one of the good ones. In his book *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis wrote, "The grace of the Holy Spirit always seeks a meek and humble heart." If so, the Holy Spirit was a permanent tenant in the heart of Billy Woitowicz.

We all loved and respected the Billy of the physical plane, but to really understand the depth of him you needed to look much deeper. I don't mean look so much as I mean feel. To know him, you had to feel Billy's spirit, the energy that exuded from him. Many of us don't slow ourselves down enough to feel the soul of another. We are too busy with our day-to-day. We waste our time idolizing athletes and movie stars. We pay too much attention to what we own, how we look, what we wear, and what others think of us. Bill cared nothing about these things—he cared about others.

Those who truly knew Bill took the time to know his spirit and they could not help but fall in love with his pure, unadulterated soul. Although I miss the Bill that I could see and hear and touch, it is the loss of his soul next to mine that has tilted my world askew. I've heard many stories from many people about Bill, including his family, my family, his friends, teachers, and others that loved him. I can't tell them all but would like to share a few that I hope you will enjoy.

Billy always seemed to be in a hurry. He didn't like staying in one place he was always talking and moving. More than once he came into our house and, as I was engrossed

in a television program or movie, he would start asking me questions. "So, Mr. Moore," (he loved to begin his sentences with the word "so"), "have you seen that show on sharks yet?" "Mr. Moore, have I told you the story about my buddy?" He referred to most everyone, it seemed, as his buddy. "Mr. Moore, what do you think of the change in the economy?" "Mr. Moore, I have a great business idea. What do you think—Grilled Cheese, a restaurant where that's all we serve. I'll let you in on it." And, invariably, he would ask, "So, Mr. Moore, how is work going for you?" Now, that isn't the type of question I typically get from a 20 year old. But Bill was anything but typical.

Karen summed up Bill when she said, "I guess what Billy always gave most was his time. He always had time for you." My son Mike said, "Bill always did what you wanted rather than what he wanted, and when you talked to him he asked about you. He rarely spoke about himself."

Mike went on to say, "There is a great debate about which I've studied in many of my philosophy and psychology classes, whether altruism in humans really exists. While to this day there is no definitive proof for or against, Billy's life, and the way he lived it, makes one hell of a case in support of its existence."

A close friend, Matt McElroy, echoed this theme in a beautiful letter he wrote to the Woitowicz family. I would like to read a part of it to you:

Bill was instantly likeable and I think I know why. I noticed it in a conversation I had with him around Christmas this year. He called me at school to see how I was doing and soon our conversation turned into him telling me how much he admired me for studying to become a lawyer and working hard towards a career. As Bill went on, I remember feeling immediately rejuvenated and energized—It is an incredible feeling to be admired like that! I tried to reciprocate the praise as much as I could because I was just as proud of him for working so hard to achieve excellence in his own profession. After thinking about our conversation that day, I reflected on past experiences with Bill and finally realized why Bill connected with so many people. I remembered Bill admiring the way I played basketball and asking for advice on how to get better; I remembered at the gym he would tell me how strong I was and saying he wanted to look like me. Even though I had seen Bill do these things before, I wasn't mature enough to realize his emotional genius, but now I know. Bill's secret was his ability to identify your best traits and tell you what they were. What an unbelievable gift! And he did it in such a genuine and honest way—never insincere. It is so rare to see that in anyone, let alone someone that young.

When Karen read Matt's letter she said immediately, That describes Rose, Joe, Rosie, it is from you that he received this wonderful trait.

Bill never wanted attention. Even though he could get a discount at some stores because he was military, he did not use it. This past December, I listened as he spoke on the phone to a store from which he had ordered three new suits. He ordered them in plenty of time for Christmas and New Years, the last time he could wear them before shipping out. But a clerk made an error and Bill was told the suits would not be there in time. He spoke patiently trying to find a way to make it happen. I said to Bill, "Tell them you are a Marine and headed to Afghanistan." He would not. I told him to give me the phone, I would talk to them. He would not. The suits did not make it; they have never been worn.

Bill did not care about money. When Chris and Matt discussed who would pick up a din-

ner check, the conversation turned to how some people never offer to pay. Bill replied, "People should not be so focused on money I like spending my money on friends." When a close high school friend expressed concern about how she was going to pay her college tuition, he told her not to worry, he had plenty of money.

Chris, Matt, Mike, Matt McElroy, and a group of their friends formed what they call the Power Group. They share inspirational sayings and their own thoughts with each other. Bill sent the following note to the group from Afghanistan.

hey chris, send this around to the power group if you think it makes the cut-its short and sweet.

(1) perception is reality, no matter what you think

(2) word travels fast, so fast that what you say about someone may travel faster than expected, and now your trying to backtrack on what was said.

(3) life is short, even to usama life was probably too short.

(4) if there's one thing i learned through this deployment so far is that what's said can be taken back, but if you don't take it back today, tomorrow may be too late.

(5) and finally, stressing over the small stuff only makes things look fuzzy around the edges and the goal is harder to accomplish.

anyways i thought i might contribute to the power group because every day i strive to be looked at as a professional, and more importantly be a professional.

eat your vegetables,
woita

Riding a dirt bike was Billy's first love. As a kid, he was determined he was going to be a professional dirt bike rider. He and Mike would often bomb up and down our driveway popping wheelies. I would hear the whine of Bill's dirt bike in the woods behind our house, it was the signal that Bill was paying us a visit. Matt's laptop screen is a picture of Bill popping a wheelie on a dirt bike in Afghanistan. Billy's Sergeant, Danny Draher, told Kevin that they use dirt bikes in Afghanistan to travel to remote areas. Each time he put Bill out on point he'd just be gone, ahead of the pack, and Sergeant Draher had to keep reeling him back in. He asked Kevin where Bill learned to ride like that. Bill was a natural. And, just like Bill, he was having fun no matter where he was.

Bill loved to eat. Rose said that when he was an infant in his crib, you could hear him from the other room making sucking sounds, looking for food. She said he was that way the rest of his life. He was eating steak at 10-months-old. One of his favorite sayings was "Eat big, get big."

One of his greatest gifts was how he could build your self-esteem. One night during dinner at our house he turned to Drew and said, "So, Drewman, are you going to play in the NBA or the NFL?"

He was a people person. When Bill was home on leave you would often find him in the Village chatting with people of any age, asking them endless questions, never turning the conversation to himself.

Kevin told me Bill loved hypotheticals. He would propose, "Dad, if we drove by a dirt bike laying along the side of the road every day for three weeks and no one claimed it, couldn't you just take it? That wouldn't be stealing would it?" Another example. Matt and Bill were having lunch together and they struck up a conversation with the man at the next table. He turned out to be the co-founder of Safety Insurance and he told the boys that he had cashed out and now lived his life helping others. He said he was a deacon at his church. Bill, who could be skeptical of organized religion, posed a hypo-

thetical. "So, let's say that I steal something and die. I learned that it is a mortal sin and if I die without confessing the sin I go to hell. But, another guy commits murder. He confesses his sin before dying and he doesn't go to hell. Explain to me how that is right?" Kevin and Chris would sometimes tease Billy about his hypotheticals. "So, Bill, if that house was sitting empty for a year could we just move in?" Bill would see the humor and laugh along with them.

Bill was a prankster. As he grew physically strong through his training, he loved to wrestle Matt, Chris, Mike, or Drew. We would be sitting talking or watching TV and, unexpectedly, he would jump up, grab one of them, and try to wrestle him to the ground. All the while, laughing and taunting, "Let's see what you got."

My daughter Jenny had gym class with Bill when she was a freshman and he was a junior. They were playing dodge ball and one of the boys hit her in the head at close range with a ball, which made her teary eyed. Billy noticed, sought out the perpetrator, took aim, and hit him square in the face. Bill the White Knight had defended her honor.

When Billy was learning to read from a picture book, the kind with one sentence per page, his dad said that any time he made a mistake he would close the book, go back to the beginning, and start over. If he made ten mistakes, that's how many times he would start again. If anyone helped him pronounce a word, he did the same. Of course, Chris enjoyed tweaking his brother by helping him with a word even if he didn't need it. Bill would yell, "You're messing me up," slam the cover shut, and start again.

Bill's Grandfather Labelle said, "All I can say about him as a child was that wherever he went he was on the run. That kid never stopped moving."

Kevin recounts another story. One hot summer afternoon when Billy was around 13 years old, Kevin was taking the kids for a drive. Just past the Village, Bill pushed a ballpoint pen into the side of a hot can of Pepsi, and it sprayed everybody and everything and made Bill roar with laughter. Kevin, furious, pulled over and yelled at Billy to start walking. Bill was laughing when got out of the car, unfazed by his dad's punishment. But, after driving away, Amanda was crying so hard for her brother, Kevin had to grudgingly go back to pick him up. There stood Bill, with a big grin still on his face, deciding whether he would get back in the car or not. After he got in, they all laughed about Bill's antics and being sticky with soda. They headed home to wash up.

On another occasion, when Bill was eight or nine, he was shopping with his dad and as they were walking back to the car there was a group of rowdy teenagers pushing and shoving each other in the parking lot. As they got closer to the teenagers, Kevin saw that they were watching them and it was clear to him they were claiming the space between them and their car. Kevin stopped and tried to move Billy to the opposite side of him, away from the teens. As he tried, Billy stopped, pushed back, and looked up at his dad and said in a loud voice, "Dad, you don't need to be afraid!" While Kevin thought he was protecting his son, Billy was looking out for his dad. Kevin said he has never forgotten how fearless Bill was.

Bill's Uncle Larry told me, "If I had a dollar for every time I heard Kevin yell, 'Billy, don't!' I would be rich. But, the amazing change in him from his childhood to adulthood is beyond comprehension." His Uncle Al said that even the growth in him from the time he started boot camp to when he graduated from MARSOC was the difference between a boy and a man.

We spend every Christmas Eve with the Woitowicz family. We have shared our home

with them and our good friends the Roccas, Hutchinsons, MacDonalds, and Decoteaus for many years. My son Matt describes it as the best night of the year. Karen goes all out decorating our home, everyone brings food, and Mr. Rocco makes his phenomenal Christmas punch. We all have some wonderful Billy memories tied to this annual celebration of our Lord's birthday and the friendship shared by our families. On a few occasions, Billy partook a bit too much of the Christmas punch and entertained us.

Typically, these events happen at the end of the evening, in our kitchen, as everyone is preparing to leave. One year Billy was telling a story, gesturing with his hands as he tended to do, and accidentally knocked our sugar bowl off the counter. It shattered as it hit the floor. We all looked at him. The expression on his face was priceless, as was his response. "I really don't know how that happened!" As we all burst into laughter he bent down and started scraping the sugar into his hands in an attempt to clean it up. He apologized to "Mrs. Moore" for days after that.

One of the best Christmas Eve memories was the year he told his parents he couldn't make it home. Matt gathered all of us in the kitchen for the purpose of making a toast to Billy. As we raised our glasses, Billy burst through the kitchen door, shocking the rest of us—especially his parents. This time the priceless expression was pasted on the faces of his parents. They were frozen, not moving, not believing—as if he were a vision. Billy the magician had made himself appear.

This past Christmas, our kids gave Kevin, Rose, Karen, and me a gift of a cruise to Bermuda. It was Billy's idea, and he was determined to do it for us. He took charge and, in his larger-than-life way, gestured through telling us how we married folk could use the time away and should enjoy some rest and relaxation. Billy the marriage counselor was taking care of us.

As in past years, at the end of the evening, around 1:00 a.m., those remaining were in the kitchen saying good-bye. Kevin and I had spent a good bit of time herding the boys up from the basement toward the door. The kids had been joking through the night about the song "Teach Me How to Dougie," which they thought was funny. I was teasing Billy that I was going to show him how to Dougie but he kept pushing me back saying he would show me. He started dancing and we all laughed as he Dougied in his tipsy state. Finally, I was able to move Billy toward the door, but he stopped abruptly, turned away, and started toward the door. Just as abruptly, he turned around, walked quickly toward me and shouted as he pointed at my chest, "Good day, sir. I said good day!" He turned again and walked out the door. We couldn't stop laughing for a long time. We tell this story often.

We have all been struggling to make sense of the loss of Billy. On the day we received the news, as Rose hugged me, she asked, "Oh, Joe what are we going to do?" My good friend Kevin and I sat and tried to make sense of it and he said, "I have always been able to fix things but I can't fix this." Kevin's nickname at the fire station is MacGyver because he really can fix almost anything, but, although we wish so much he could, this is not fixable.

I can feel the pain of his brother and sister, Chris and Mandy, and my kids, his other brothers and sister, Matt, Mike, Jenny, and Drew. I see the hurt behind the eyes of my good friends Jay, Peter, Ralph, and Mark, and many others that were so close to Billy. I see the swollen eyes of his young friends. And I feel the unbelief and numbness as I read the letters, e-mail, and texts from those that loved him. Karen and I can't stop crying. But most of all, I can barely endure the grief I see in Kevin and Rose.

Casey Mahoney, the daughter of Brian and Kirsten Mahoney, and friends of Billy's family wrote a beautiful poem for Bill. God bless Billy for all of his love, God bless the loving father above, God bless Billy's family and friends, We all pray that war will end.

Oh, Bill Boy, where have you gone? Why did you leave us? What answer do I give your mother if she asks me again, "What are we going to do now?" And, Dear Lord our God, why did you take our Billy away?

Maybe there is no answer, or at least not one we can understand. Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote [paraphrased]. Above all God destines us an end beyond the grasp of reason; according to Isaiah, Our Eyes cannot see, O God, without your help, what you have prepared for those that love you. Many things are shown that are above the understanding of men.

As to your question, Rosie, I can only say that we will endure through the love that we have for Bill, and he for us. He is with you. He will be able to help you more now, where he is, than when he was here. He loves his parents, he told me that during one of our many conversations, and he wants you to be happy. He respects you, Kevin. He will be with you, Chris, when you move to Virginia. You know that he will try to wrestle you to the ground, even from heaven. He will guide your hand, Mandy, as you learn to become a nurse like your mother. He is standing next to all of you right now, right there, and he is looking at me saying, "Don't worry Mr. Moore, they will be okay. I will make sure of it."

To my last question, I received a reply in a dream the other night. God said, "Remember, Joe, he was my son too. And, although I did not call him home—that was his choice—my heart ached, as yours does now, when I released him to Earth at his request to be with and guide Rose and Kevin, Chris and Mandy, you and your family, and his many friends. That was his mission, and like everything he does, he chose it enthusiastically."

As to where Billy has gone, I am certain I know that answer. He is sitting next to God our Father. His arm is around Bill and He has a look of great pride on His face. Bill is bathed in the pure love and light of God the Holy Spirit. And, he is chatting up his friend Jesus, asking him a thousand questions. "Are those gates really made of pearl, or do they just say that?" "Can I ride my dirt bike here?" "Yo, Jesus, would you introduce me to Mr. Moore's dad?" "Do I get to eat here, and do you have grilled cheese?" "Dude, have I told you the story about my friend?" And, invariably, "How is your work going for you, Jesus?"

The Blessed Virgin Mother Mary is hugging him while smiling and saying, "Welcome back, Billy, I missed you. You have always been one of my favorites." He is teaching the Cherubim and Seraphim how to Dougie. He is receiving a salute from the greatest military heroes of all time—there are rows and rows of them, as far as you can see, and the Marines are out in front, just as in battle. Chesty Puller, the great Marine, is shaking Bill's hand and pinning the highest award given in heaven to soldiers who sacrifice their lives for others, the Wooden Cross of Jesus.

When Jesus introduces them, my dad says, "Yes, Billy, I am very proud of you."

And, he is wrestling St. Peter to the ground.

He is reading a poem that he wants me to share with you now.

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am in a thousand winds that blow,
I am the softly falling snow.

I am the gentle shower of rain,
I am the field of ripening grain.
I am the morning hush,
I am the graceful rush,
Of beautiful birds in circling flight,
I am the star shine of the night.
I am in the flowers that bloom,
I am in a quiet room.
I am in the birds that sing,
I am in each lovely thing.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there, I do not die.

He is whispering in my ear, "Don't worry Mr. Moore. Everything will be okay."

I know it will, Bill. Eventually. But, before you go, there is something you need to hear. And this time, please listen carefully.

Your mom wanted me to tell you, "I want you to know that as soon as I could pull myself together, I had our family say a prayer of gratitude to you because underneath my deep grief is the tremendous joy of loving you for 23 years."

I love you too, Billy, and I promise never to forget how much you've meant to me.

Semper Fi [salute my friend]

"Good day, sir. I said, good day."

CAPTAIN MATTHEW GUNNAR NIELSON

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a noble fallen warrior. CAPT Matthew Gunnar Nielson of Jefferson, IA, gave his life for his country on June 29, 2011, during an attack by insurgents in Badrah, Iraq. He was 27 years old. My prayers are with Captain Nielson's parents, Roger and Christine, and all his family and friends who are feeling his loss.

In a statement, his family said, "Since Matt was a small boy he loved anything military, so he died doing what he loved best. Serving others was of the utmost importance to him and how he wanted to spend his life. He always gave his all, whatever he was doing. Matthew was a beloved son, brother, friend and Soldier. He's already home, and we know we'll be together again someday. Apart, but forever in our hearts. Psalms 11." What can I say about such selfless service and sacrifice? We just celebrated 235 years of independence and liberty, which is an occasion to reflect on the incalculable debt we owe to Matt and his comrades in arms over the years who have secured that legacy for us and for posterity. So long as we continue to have brave patriots like Matthew Nielson who are willing to give their all for their fellow Americans, our heritage as a free people will be in safe hands.

TRIBUTE TO JOE BYKOWSKI

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I want to take a few minutes to offer special congratulations to Joseph "Joe" Bykowski, an extraordinary young man who has served Massachusetts and the United States in remarkable ways.

After returning home from service in the Iraq war, Joe wanted to give something back to his fellow veterans. So since 2007 he has interned in my Boston office for 4 days a week, working with