

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 disbelief 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

my senior staff on behalf of active servicemembers, veterans and their families. He is also an active member of the American Legion and the Catholic War Veterans Organization, where he volunteers in assisting wounded veterans and their families. And as if that is not enough, all the while he has also been working toward an undergraduate degree at UMass Boston.

This spring, Joe completed his degree's requirements. During the university's commencement ceremony, UMass Boston Chancellor J. Keith Motley cited Joe as an inspiration to all his classmates. "Joseph Bykowski served our country for eight years, from Ground Zero, to Iraq, before he joined us to major in history and political science," Chancellor Motley said. "He is a leader in veterans' affairs on campus and at the State House, where he's testified before the legislature, interned for Senator JOHN KERRY, and helped found the nation's first program dedicated to our veterans' mental health. Joe has overcome tremendous personal obstacles to get where he is, and he lifts others up with him."

I couldn't agree more. I have known Joe for 5 years, and I have been impressed all along by his dedication to public service and his devotion to his fellow veterans. It was Joe's idea to organize a "Welcome Home Cruise" to honor wounded Massachusetts vets who had just returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan. Joe worked with my office and leveraged his ties to Massachusetts Vets organizations, working together to invite hundreds of vets and their families to join us for an evening on the water in Boston. I was honored to have the chance to present several of our wounded heroes with Purple Hearts on that boat—a memory I treasure, and one I don't think would have been possible without Joe's creativity and initiative.

Joe is still reaching out to veterans. Just this month, Joe helped us arrange an honorary GED for Vietnam veteran Ron Estrella, a longtime patient at the Brockton VA spinal care unit who was diagnosed with terminal cancer. To earn the GED, Ron worked with UMass-Boston's Upward Bound, a program that helps students finish high school—no surprise, it is just one more program where Joe himself is an active leader and member.

President Kennedy once said that "the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." He would have recognized that quality in Joe Bykowski. Joe has lived—and continues to live—a life devoted to service to country, in many forms. Whether he's serving on the other side of the world on the frontlines in Iraq, or down the street at the New England Center for Homeless Veterans serving a spaghetti dinner, there's one constant: Joe lives for service.

I have no doubt that he will put his UMass-Boston degree to the same great use.

I congratulate Joe Bykowski on his graduation, thank him for his service

these last years in my office, and salute all that he's accomplished. We can't wait to see what he does next.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL E. LEITER

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Michael Leiter, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center and a good friend of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. This is Mike's last week and I want to thank him for his service and wish him the very best in the next steps in his career.

Director Leiter has been at the National Counterterrorism Center, or NCTC, for most of its existence. He was the principal deputy director from February 2007 to November of that year when he became the acting director. President Bush nominated him to be the Director on March 31, 2008, and he was confirmed by the Senate on June 10, 2008.

Mike has served in both the Bush and Obama administrations which speaks to his bipartisan and professional approach to the Nation's security, and the support that he has earned from the Congress and within the executive branch.

His leadership at the NCTC has brought stability and continuity to our Nation's counterterrorism efforts, and he should take pride in the fact that under his tenure, there have been no successful attacks against the United States homeland by foreign terrorists. In this threat environment, that is an impressive accomplishment indeed.

As is often the nature of the intelligence business, much of the successes of the National Counterterrorism Center go unrecognized. Terrorists plotting and carrying out attacks are captured through good intelligence and law enforcement work, and through strong cooperation with allies and partners around the world. Often, terrorist plots fail to proceed because of the barriers to recruit, travel, raise funds, get training, or gain access to destructive materials that have been erected through the efforts of the United States and other nations.

Even in counterterrorism victories that become known, such as the cases of Najibullah Zazi in the United States or the identification of Usama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, the National Counterterrorism Center's important—sometimes absolutely critical role—is often not well known.

So I am pleased today to be able to recognize Mike Leiter for his work in keeping our Nation safe for the past 4½ years.

As a member, and now as chair of the Intelligence Committee, I have come to rely on Mike's analysis and judgment. He has been willing to admit that at times our counterterrorism policies or practices haven't been what they should be.

He has appeared regularly before the committee and has been very accessible for the committee's staff as well.

In addition to the regularly scheduled meetings we hold, I have received secure calls from Mike often, apprising me on new threats and the status of investigations. He is, without fail, available to provide updates and assessments, and I appreciate the importance he has placed on keeping the committee, and me personally, fully informed.

Director Leiter has also worked tirelessly to achieve the goals set out for the National Counterterrorism Center in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. The NCTC was established to bring together information and officers from across the intelligence community and from other parts of the government involved in the spectrum of counterterrorism, including counter-radicalization, detection, and prevention of attacks.

Even after the experiences of 9/11 and the findings of the 9/11 Commission, it was a difficult and enormously frustrating challenge to truly integrate the Nation's counterterrorism efforts. It speaks to Director Leiter's energy and dedication that he was, eventually, able to bring together analysts from the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, and military services to share the threat streams that each one collected and assessed.

The result has been the ability to better connect the intelligence information that points to suspicious activity, to develop the case when a terrorist or a terror plot is identified, and to take coordinated action to disrupt that plot.

The NCTC now produces, on a daily basis, its own counterterrorism analysis that provides Intelligence Community-wide assessments and warning. Analysts at the NCTC are among the finest we have, and Director Leiter has fostered a productive environment through analytical roundtables and weekly forums in which analysts share information, provide briefings, and develop improved analytic tradecraft.

In fact, I recently learned that as the CIA was developing its assessment that Usama bin Laden was in the Abbottabad compound, it turned to NCTC analysts to "red-team" the intelligence case and give their assessments. And Director Leiter was involved in the briefings and discussions with the President that led to the decision to carry out the operation.

Director Leiter has demonstrated leadership in hard times, as well. After the failed terrorist attack on a Detroit-bound airliner on December 25, 2009, investigations uncovered significant failures and shortcomings in our counterterrorism efforts. The Senate Intelligence Committee's review found 14 specific "points of failure" across the government that enabled Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to come so close to carrying out a major attack.