



THE SGT TYRELL SETH WILLIAMS, USMC ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

“Once a Marine Mom, Always a Marine Mom”

Respectfully Submitted

9 March 2017

Dayton Ann Williams

In Loving Memory of my First Born Son



SGT Tyrell Seth (T. S.) Williams
United States Marine Corps 2003-2007
25 December 1976 – 11 February 2008

Semper Fidelis

A Marine Mom

On 11 February 2008, less than 90 days returning from his 3rd tour in Iraq, my son was killed in a hit-and-run in Austin, TX. He died in the street alone. It wasn't until he was struck a second time, and nearly an hour later, that law enforcement and emergency services were notified. The perpetrator was never identified.

These past 9 years have been a journey of healing whereby the death of my son began a series of losses that were a catalyst in re-defining myself. To use my experiences, skills and expertise for the purpose of helping others.

Nevertheless, my healing requires a closure which can only occur once I establish a way to honor my son the man, and my son the Marine. Creating a need-based endowed scholarship for Veterans attending *The University of Texas at Austin* is my closure; an expression which transforms this tragedy into grace.

A Message of Gratitude

On February 22, 2008, less than 2 weeks after Tyrell's death, I sent an email to President Bush. Why? Because I was swimming in pain and I needed to do something positive. Tyrell joined the service because he heard a message from the President...and that motivated him. Up until that time, he was a young man who was lost. When he came home, after his 3rd and final tour, he was changed. He was a man with a purpose, grounded and solid. *That* is what the Marines did for him. As his mother, I became forever indebted to the Marines for they supported him evolving into an honorable man; they gave him a purpose. I was only able to witness the beautiful man my son had become for less than 90 days; I was only becoming acquainted with the man who had become a Marine.

Imagine the hundreds of thousands of emails that are sent to the President of the United States, however, my email was not considered spam nor was it lost in the shuffle. On a Saturday morning, a mere 3 weeks later, I received an overnight package from the White House with a signed letter from the President and a medallion from his Office.

eMail to President Bush

From: Dayton
Sent: Friday, February 22, 2008 1:32 PM
To: 'comments@whitehouse.gov'
Cc: 'vice_president@whitehouse.gov'
Subject: With Deepest Thanks Mr. President....

Dear President Bush,

On behalf of my son, Tyrell Seth Williams, I am writing this letter to you. As a result of Tyrell hearing one of your speeches regarding terrorism, he signed up to serve in the United States Marine Corps in 2003. During his 4.5 years of service, he completed 3 tours in Iraq. He was not obligated to serve the third tour, however, he wanted to support his brothers and do his part to ensure they stayed safe.

Tyrell was honorably discharged, at the rank of Sergeant, in November 2007, returned to Bryan, TX. On 20 December, 5 days before his 31st birthday, he moved to Austin, TX to begin his new life. During the next 6 weeks, Tyrell was the happiest that I have ever seen him. He was passionate about living in Austin and explored the city in depth. He was in the process of enrolling in college, and applying for jobs. He was purchasing household items and establishing a comfortable life. In sports terms, 'he was at the top of his game'.

Everything ended when, on 11 February 2008, he was struck by a hit-and-run driver and fatally injured. At this time, we still have no information or leads as to who was responsible for this tragedy. While we deeply mourn the loss of a man that was a son, grand-son, brother, friend and Marine, we take comfort in the fact that Tyrell served his country with honor, returned safely to us, and that we were all able to spend several joyful weeks together. We had the opportunity to witness the amazing changes that had occurred, as a direct result, of his service in the United States Marine Corps. Tyrell entered the Corps searching for meaning and direction to his life. He exited the Corps a strong man who knew that he had a purpose, and he was honored to have served his country and support his brothers.

As the Commander-in-Chief, I want you know what a powerful effect that you had on Tyrell. He was deeply moved by your speech, and this radically changed his life forever, and for the better. And, for this, I am deeply grateful. I am including below the memorial folder so that you may know how we honored our son. I considered sending the newspaper clippings of the tragic accident, however, this is not where I choose to direct my focus. While it is my desire that the person who took my son's life be identified and brought to justice, I also know that everything in this life happens for a reason.

I wish you the best, Mr. President. It was your influence...your words...that touched my son's heart and soul, and ultimately allowed him to serve in what he believed to be the greatest branch of our services, the United States Marine Corps. I am both honored and grateful.

Semper Fidelis,
Dayton Williams

Letter From President Bush



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2008

Ms. Dayton Williams
715 Eagle Pass Street
Bryan, Texas 77802

Dear Dayton:

Your heartfelt note just reached me in the Oval Office. I am deeply saddened by the loss of your son. Brave individuals like Tyrell are what make our military the greatest force for freedom in the history of the world, and I am inspired by his devotion to duty. We will always remember his service and sacrifice, and he will forever have the respect and admiration of a grateful Nation.

Laura and I will keep you and your family in our prayers. May God bless you, and may God bless America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "G. W. Bush", written over a horizontal line.

George W. Bush

An eMail from Tyrell's CO

From: Laube, Gottfried H. Maj
Sent: Friday, February 15, 2008 2:16 AM
To: Dayton
Subject: RE: Services for Tyrell (Ty) Williams

Mrs Williams,

He emailed me just last week asking if I would be a reference for him in his job applications. Ma'am, only if you are able, if you could tell me more about the circumstances which surround the incident. I will completely understand if you cannot.

Sgt Williams and I were very close. I was his commanding officer but more importantly, when I went out into danger, he was always right by my side. He NEVER failed to make sure I could always talk to my people and my people to each other; he was absolutely the best radio communicator I ever had... and I have had many. Even more so, I know that beyond professional bounds, he and I were friends. We were the same age, not common for the commanding officer and the junior enlisted. And when we had down time, he and I used to smoke cigars/cigarettes together, exchange music and look at the beautiful Iraqi sunsets and just talk to each other. We never overstepped the officer/enlisted relationship, but we knew we could always count on each other. Having him around made the hardships of a combat tour in Iraq easier to bear. It is Marines like him that keep me in The Corps.

I sincerely hope that none of this came across as insensitive. I am in disbelief and trying to deal with this. We suffered a great deal of loss as Weapons Company. This one is the hardest for me. I want to be there but I am stationed in Stuttgart Germany and not sure if I will be allowed to take leave. I will try.

I will miss Tyrell. He was a great man and I know he is in a better place. My heart goes out to you and your family; you are in my thoughts and prayers. God bless you.

Semper Fidelis,

Moni Laube

Major, US Marines

Another eMail

From: Laube, Gottfried H. Maj [
Sent: Friday, February 15, 2008 7:51 AM
To: Dayton
Subject: RE: Services for Tyrell (Ty) Williams

Ma'am,

First, thank you for telling me what you know. I can only imagine how hard that must be for you.

I hope you don't mind but I contacted 1stSgt Aaron McDonald, my First Sergeant in Weapons Company. I asked him to get a hold of Capt (ret) Patrick McElhone who was Tyrell's platoon commander on the 22nd MEU and his/my executive officer this last deployment. Actually, Ty, Patrick and I worked together in Iskandariyah in the Command Operations Center.

He was only a Lance Corporal then... and back then he was head and shoulders above his fellow radio watches. He showed real promise back then (04-05) so you can imagine my extreme pleasure to know that I was getting him as my RTO when I took command of weapons company. Anyway, Aaron is going to call you because he is stationed in Lubbock at the Reserve Center as the Inspector & Instructor First Sergeant. He would very much like to come to the ceremony. He too was very close to Tyrell. Aaron was my right hand so the three of us went everywhere together. We spent many a hot day out in the deserts of Al Anbar hunting the bad guy, then sitting down to an MRE and a cigar by night.

First Sergeant tried like hell to keep Ty in the Marine Corps because it was definitely a better Corps with him in it. I'm sure when you talk to him he'll tell you much the same. He is going to call Patrick for me as I am at work and don't have his number with me.

Patrick will take this news hard, I'm sure. Tyrell and Patrick worked together directly on three combat deployments. They had as close and as effective an officer/enlisted relationship you could get. I am pretty sure that Patrick was one of the reasons Ty chose to do that third deployment. We all had tremendous respect for Ty for volunteering to deploy to a combat zone for a third time. He struck me as the kind of guy that would do something like that for no other reason than for his brothers that had fought with him.

I just read through this email and realized that I didn't know whether to call him Ty or Tyrell. That's because I knew him as Sergeant. I had a great deal of respect for him and to call him anything other than the honorable rank that he worked so hard to earn would be in my opinion, disrespectful. But I can't stress this enough Ma'am... Just because we (Patrick and I) called him "Sergeant" and he called us "Sir" didn't mean that our relationship with each other was any less special. In fact I would characterize it as something beyond friendship. Life after the Corps will often lead to brothers winding up on opposite ends of the earth like in Ty's and my case. But we take comfort in knowing that no matter where you go, if there is a Marine in town that you served with, you got a place to stay. I don't think most people can understand how a friendship can be maintained with so many years of no contact. But, like I said... its more than friendship.

Semper Fidelis,

Moni

In Appreciation

My son gave me a keychain which bears the message “Once a Marine Mom, Always a Marine Mom”. I carry it with pride and believe it is a representation of my membership in the Marine family.

This endowment expresses who Tyrell was. He supported his family, his friends, and his brothers and sisters in service to our country by graciously giving from his beautiful heart. Establishing this endowment is an expression of my love and my desire to honor my son; attending The University of Texas at Austin was his dream when he returned home.

*With honor you have served our country and now you are diligently moving forward with your life. It is my hope this scholarship will fuel your desire to stay the course; to accomplish **your** dream. Thank you for your service and your sacrifice. It is a privilege to be a part of your journey .*