



Because of *Friends* like You

Nature of Sacrifice Together Apart

As human beings, we are hard wired to connect. Our connections allow us to establish deep and cherished relationships. They help us find the support needed to pull us through unpredictable times. This need to connect is especially heightened in times of crisis. The latest crisis has served as an acute reminder of our fragility, feeding our anxiety. To make matters worse, we have repeatedly been told to stay apart, to keep our distance – the usual sanctuary, the ‘safe place to land’ precipitously removed. Overnight, ***‘help save lives by staying home’*** became our new mantra. But as humans, we were never meant to face critical times alone. When we can’t band together by being together, we feel more vulnerable than ever - making it even more difficult to socially distance ourselves from those we love.

We deal with these moments of vulnerability differently. But collectively, Americans rose to the occasion - taking a cue from the greatest generation. A generation that understands the nature of sacrifice. “We all have a part to play” became the new battle cry. For some, it meant adapting to virtual technology, life where sports were suddenly missing from a usually overscheduled school day or dealing gracefully with cancelled proms, graduations, and weddings. For others, it meant balancing 24/7 parenting, home schooling, and working in unusually challenging environments. For still others, it meant repurposing our job skills, temporary loss of employment,

furlough or an inability to celebrate our faith in community with others. But our problems pale in comparison to those directly affected by the wrath of the virus.

Families supporting their loved ones in hospitals and nursing homes across the country during the initial period of the outbreak quickly arrived at the startling realization that a reassuring hug or kiss might be the very thing that exposed their loved one to risk. Many were faced with the abrupt news that hospitals were shutting down to visitors. Couples, many well into their golden years together, were suddenly asked to render a hasty goodbye, leaving loved ones without their support at their most vulnerable time. “We’ve seen a lot of bad times over the years” said one guest at Fisher House, “but we always had each other to face it together - this is going to be tough”. And so they sacrificed by ***‘staying home’*** for their loved one. Worse yet, many who lost loved ones along the way were unable to properly mourn and celebrate the life they lost. And yet, they stayed home knowing they had a bigger part to play in this battle, however painful.

We associate vulnerability with weakness. But for us all, vulnerability during COVID -19 has served as the path to courage. There is no courage without vulnerability. Americans have certainly stepped up in this moment of trial by being selfless for others –by playing their part. It has provided a feeling of togetherness we have all been yearning for – being apart but staying together.

‘Friends’ mourn those lost to the scourge of COVID-19 and all those who have sacrificed by staying home for their loved one!



The nature of being a health care professional has always been to work without accolade, but the sheer enormity of COVID-19 has required unprecedented sacrifice. Their lifelong commitment to saving others suddenly means facing grave personal danger. Despite feeling vulnerable, first-responders, doctors, nurses,

respiratory technicians, pharmacists, food service, housekeeping and many others have faced the challenges with courage – and in the process inspired us all. ***The Fisher House Family of Friends salutes all those essential workers who have stood ready to support our country during our moments of trial.***

Soaring with Eagles

Walking the Walk

You may recall the story of Sam Peterson, the young man who sought out opportunities to complete his Eagle Scout project in support of Fisher House. Through Sam’s fundraising, his Peter Pan type play space opened in 2015, coinciding with the unveiling of the second Fisher House on Joint Base Lewis McChord. When asked about his proudest moment of the entire project, he recalls, “it was not opening day or his award of the rank of Eagle Scout”, he said, but a pivotal “moment much later”. When he returned to the house to cook a guest dinner, a small girl took him by the hand, into the play room he had created, and introduced him to all the toys! “For me, that was the capstone of the project” Sam tells me.

But of course, our readers know the story doesn’t end there. Younger brother Ben has now officially walked a similar ‘path less taken’, with sights on Aeronautical Engineering and the Air Force Academy. His Fitness Room Eagle Scout project at the original JBLM Fisher House has now been completed. Pam Barrington, House Manager at JBLM Fisher House I and II says “we were so pleased to approve the project and work with Ben in

all phases of the project. The Petersen family has had a longstanding tradition of caring for the guests of Fisher House JBLM. So, it came as no surprise that Ben offered his services as Fisher House I was being renovated. He, along with the staff, felt that a gym would provide a space for guests to decompress after long days spent in the hospital with their loved ones. The JBLM Fisher House thanks Ben and the rest of the Petersen family for their continued acts of kindness and unrelenting effort to provide happiness for the guests of the Fisher Houses at JBLM.”

Well done Ben!



Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound

Our mission is to ease the burden on our Veterans and their families during difficult times. As a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization registered in Washington State, the Friends work to raise funds and awareness in support of the Fisher Houses in the Puget Sound region. We are grateful for your partnership with us!

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Running with Angels

Honoring a Gentle Giant

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience. Rather, it is where he stands in the face of adversity – and of course how he manages a pink princess blanket.

And so begins the story of a couple who turned personal tragedy into just another of life's triumphs. Imagine surviving decorated Army service during Vietnam, piloting single engine aircraft, withstanding the rigors of commercial fishery, lifeguarding, construction, and long-time community service as a police officer - only to be struck by a texting driver 10 years ago. Although paralyzed from the chest down and suffering daily from the myriad of health problems caused by his injuries, Bradley lived the last 10 years of his life with the same bravery, kindness, and humor that he showed every day of his 69 years on this earth. In July, Brad and Christine would have celebrated 50 years together. Brad passed away in January.

They understood how short time on earth is and they made the most of it. Their first date served as a litmus test of Brad's wit and charm. Receiving Christine's advance warning that she had a 'pet' elephant, Brad approached the date with a healthy mix of skepticism and whimsy. To his surprise Annabelle, an elephant bottle fed since birth on the ranch where Christine worked, used her trunk to greet Brad! "It was the first of many adventures" says Christine, "on the water, in our motor home, in the air, pulling the trailer, black bears in our garage, a wolverine in the yard. I could go on and on, our stories would fill ten books. We lived multiple lifetimes in 50 years together", she reflects.

Their unending stories serve as poignant reminders not only of the frailty of life, but also of the tremendous power of goodness and

resiliency. Brad, coined a gentle giant of a man, was fair and consistent, loving and kind. On the streets of his Anchorage police beat, he cared deeply about making the outcasts feel welcome, treating them with respect and dignity. As a young lifeguard, the persistence of his third cold water attempt when others reverted to a recovery mission, saved a young grateful life. "Just the kind of a man that Brad was, he saved a lot of lives over the years" Christine recounts.

Brad had every reason to be bitter after his accident but he would have none of it. Instead, Brad and Christine did their best to seize the opportunities around them. Enduring eight years of difficult surgeries and evaluation, they became frequent visitors to the VA hospital's Spinal Cord unit (SCI) and adjacent Fisher House. Weathering the strain of his own recovery, he became somewhat of a resident expert. Brad endlessly visited other SCI patients to offer ideas and encouragement to ease adjustment to their new physical reality. When Brad drafted a boat dock for a patient despondent over his inability to get back out on the water, Brad remarked "I might not have the physical ability to build it but I still have the knowledge to share."

Christine for her part, advocated for other Fisher House guests and other SCI families. "Injury and illness puts people in a different position in life. We all just want to do positive things to help our sweethearts and not feel alone. All tolled, I stayed over 500 nights at Fisher House. A lot of people were there for me over the years and I was there for them to share what I had learned. I can't say enough about how amazing the Fisher House is and how much they sheltered me and helped us both be able to continue those last 10 years together."



Brad was not without special help in his journey. Grandpa's pride and joy, young granddaughter Hailey arrived one day with her 'Pink Princess' blanket in tow. Upon seeing Grandpa transfer to the chair needing assistance, she bestowed her precious blanket to him and out of the mouth of babes exclaimed "Grandpa, this is yours until you walk again". That famous pink blanket accompanied Brad everywhere from that day forward. Just before Brad passed away, he asked Christine to return the blanket to Hailey, now 14 years old. "Please give the princess blanket back to Hailey, will you," he asked. "Tell her Grandpa doesn't need it anymore, I'll be running with the Angels".

Life always comes bearing gifts. Even in the worst of times, we find happiness. Today our happiness is remembering how lucky we are to share the love story of Brad and Christine and to feel the warmth that endeared him to so many throughout his life.

Angel Among Friends

Smiling Together

It is with great sadness that the Fisher House Puget Sound Family of Friends mourns the passing of our beloved "Friend" Betty. We came to know Betty through her longtime giving and her official designation as a Fisher House Angel – "recognized for her exceptional dedication to improve the quality of life of our greatest national treasure, our military service members and their loved ones". She is preceded in death by husband and Korea Veteran Jack, who she described during a 2018 interview as the love of her life and best friend.

Typical of the greatest generation, she had a heart for Veterans and for her community. She was a firm believer in philanthropy – "Donate your dollars -Donate your time" to help your local community" she often said. Despite recent medical issues of her own, she hosted meals at Fisher House and became the grandma listening and consoling

family members in a way only your grandmother can. Betty worked at a variety of jobs over the years saying she "wanted to have something interesting to tell her grandchildren about". She was a riveter at Boeing, a telephone operator (when it was a switchboard), she sold peanuts at Long Acres, and she was a manager, cocktail server and waitress for many years. At one time she and a friend co-owned a craft store in Brier. Her family says there were many times she told us "if I were to go tomorrow, I've had it all and wouldn't change a thing. I married the man I loved (Jack), had two wonderful children- Joseph and Shelley, and had 7 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren. I've had many friends that I loved dearly, and the only thing that I would ask for is that everyone I loved, knew it."

Fisher House knew it, Betty!

As we bid Betty a fond farewell, we will always remember her connection to the larger community of family. We are left speechless by her legacy and convinced our Angel among Friends is safely in heaven with Jack! And no doubt, Betty and Jack Are Smiling Together.



Late Night Comes to Fisher House

Banding Together with Kindred Spirits

For most of us, the term 'Late Night' conjures up thoughts of Carson, Letterman, (ok, we are dating ourselves) Kimmel, or Corden. We look forward to washing away life's cares and worries with some good old fashioned comic relief. But at Fisher House, 'Late Night' takes on a far different meaning, something far more significant and consequential - relationships that create a kindred spirit connection.

"The Late Night Club, as we came to call ourselves" says Dottie, "started almost by accident". A few guests, staying late at the hospital each and every day to support the constant needs of their loved ones, often arrived back at the Fisher House during late night hours. Faced with everyday chores like laundry, they stumbled upon each other creeping around wash machines or making sandwiches for tomorrow's lunch. Organically evolving one guest at a time, the group invited other late nighters to come on out of their rooms and join the group. What they craved was conversation...what they gained was a far deeper personal connection than they ever imagined.

Over time, the group found that they served as a sort of touchstone of their common purpose in supporting their loved one during difficult times. The members relate that "we learned about each other's stories. Every single person helped give us energy, lit us up and provided unconditional love and compassion. We felt good around each other and appreciated the nightly kinship for the love and healing it created." Dottie laughs, "So many self-deprecating jokes were regularly exchanged, like repeated stories of forgetting our key cards and locking ourselves out of the facility under the most awkward of situations late at night". One member, a retired nurse tending to her husband, was

affectionately referred to as the Energizer Bunny for the ceaseless energy and fun ideas she brought to the group. Anita, the seamstress in the group, solved the microwave 'hot' dilemma by fashioning a hot pad for the unique circumstance of late night cooking. The one and only male member of the group brought an additional humanistic perspective to the nightly conversation by supporting many of the homeless Veterans around the facility in his precious spare time with a hearty "Welcome Brother". One adoring wife related that she and her husband never had a fight their entire marriage, sharing their secrets to blissful coexistence through the metaphor of playing cards-"he always thinks he is winning!"

"We saw each other through a lot of bad times too" say Dottie. Many of the members lost their spouses along their Late Night journey- some awaiting the transplant that never came or disease complications that were just too overwhelming for a once healthy body to take. Through it all, they came to intuitively know when others needed emotional support. They connected on a different level, united by shared life challenges and long goodbyes. According to Dottie, the common strength that pushed many through their late night journey was deep faith and wonderful family. "We came to think of each other, all the spouses, and the Fisher House staff as family". Dottie becomes emotional when she shares, "I've cried my eyes out for all the Veterans, hospitalized like my husband, but going through their hospitalization without anyone. We were so lucky



to have a big comfortable home to share our joy, laughter and sorrow and lighten our load at Fisher House".

As Dottie departed the Halls of Late Night Fisher House, she recalls injecting humor to her sad goodbye by singing "So long, farewell Auf Wiedersehen, goodnight... I hate to go and leave this pretty sight". But she reassures us that many of the late Night crowd are still friends and will remain so for a long time. That's what it is about kindred spirits, their talents just fit together, they are in sync. Kindred spirits look and feel like true family - they just know they were meant to help each other in some important way!

The Fisher House Family of Friends extends our condolences to Dottie as we note the passing of her dearest husband shortly after this interview. We salute him for his service and recognize Dottie and all the members of the Late Night Club for their courage, dedication, and humor.

PORTLAND

FAMILIES
SERVED
1036

OCCUPANCY
RATE
87%

NUMBER OF
LODGING
NIGHTS
4538

Average
Length
of Stay
5 Days

PUGET SOUND

FAMILIES
SERVED
764

OCCUPANCY
RATE
81%

NUMBER OF
LODGING
NIGHTS
5904

Average
Length
of Stay
11 Days

JBLM

FAMILIES
SERVED
104

OCCUPANCY
RATE
80%

NUMBER OF
LODGING
NIGHTS
2637

Average
Length
of Stay
2-4 WKS



Matt McAllister (radio show and event host) and Country Singer Kip Moore with the Wolfpack team.

Friends participates in the annual Morning Wolfpack (100.7 FM) Military Breakfast, raising awareness among Veterans and their families about the mission of Fisher House in their local community.



Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound selected as a recipient charity of King County Metro Chili Cook-off.

Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound

PO Box 18253

Seattle, Washington 98118

(206) 501 - 8860

Website: www.fisherhousevaps.org

Email: friends@fisherhousevaps.org

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Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound – “Because a Family’s Love is Good Medicine”

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email: _____

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Enclosed is my donation for \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound

This gift is in honor of:

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This gift is anonymous. Please do not list my name in any published texts.

I was a guest of Fisher House (VA) (JBLM).

I would like to make a recurring gift using a VISA or MASTERCARD.

Please call me at _____

Please mail checks to Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound, PO Box 18253, Seattle, Washington 98118.



If you would like us to notify someone that you have made an honorary or memorial gift, please provide the name(s) and address(es) so we can send them a note:

You may also give online. Visit www.fisherhousevaps.org and click on the “Donate” button.