

Jay Weesner
September 6, 2014

USS Hunt DD674 Association Kansas City Reunion Memorial Message

Before I begin, I want to take a moment to not only recognize, but thank Jessica Lane for taking on the responsibility of hosting the 2014 USS HUNT naval reunion here in Kansas City. I know when I spoke with her earlier this year, she said she was hosting to honor her late grandfather, Ray Lane. Please join me in giving her a round of applause for all her hard work! Thank you Jessica!

Remembering Friends

In the book of Proverbs, scripture tells us “*A man of many [unreliable] companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer, one to another*” (Proverbs 18:24).

When I read this verse, I thought of all my *friends* I have made by having the privilege of serving as your Chaplain for the USS HUNT DD674 Naval Association. Karla and I have been coming to these reunions for almost 20 years now, and while you may have started out as acquaintances, you opened your hearts to us and became our *friends*.

Many of you know, 2013 was a particularly hard year for our family, but as our friends, you were quick with a phone call, a caring card or a heartfelt prayer and for that we can't thank you enough. Honestly, 2014 has been even harder with Joshy's accident, yet again, your concern for our well-being was so sincere it led me to this question.

What would we do without friends?

What *would* we do without friends? They *encourage* and *inspire* us. They listen like they really care, *because they do*. Good friends seek to *understand* and *empathize* with us. Even when they can't relate, they care about us anyway. They accept us for who we are, despite our differences.

Friends are fun! We enjoy being around them. When we can talk, laugh, pray and play with someone we trust, we have found a real treasure. We *give* and *receive*, we *love* and *learn*. Above all, in friendship, we seek what is *best* for each other. No matter what our age or stage in life, we never outgrow our *need* for connection, for *having* and *being* a good friend. Loving with words and actions is a hallmark of true friendship.

“If one falls down, his friend can help him up” (Ecc. 4:10a).

Bob Hunneyman made trips halfway across the country to spend time with Dwight and Mary Irish and minister to them in their darkest hours during Dwight's fight with cancer. I know others made phone calls and sent get well cards. It's hard to believe Dwight's gone. He was larger than life. One of our favorite reunions was in Albuquerque which was hosted by Dwight and Mary. Karla said that every time she sees a hot air balloon go up in the sky, she thinks of Dwight and his wonderful smile.

Jesus said, “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

I know we all miss Shirley Fetterhoff, who was such an important part of our Hunt family. She had one of the kindest spirits I've ever come across. She was so loving and sweet. Oh and that laugh...that charming laugh and that infectious smile. Last year, for the first time, I got to meet her son Dennis, yet it felt I had known him for years because of the way Shirley talked about her kids and grandkids. As Shirley's illness progressed, I saw Jim take care of her in such a loving way. Not only were they husband and wife, Jim and Shirley exemplified what it meant to be best friends and love as Jesus loved.

**“Come and listen, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me” (Psalm 66:16).**

Please keep our good friend and secretary Lorraine Cummings in your prayers. As many of you all know, she is recovering from surgery and can't be with us this trip. She has always been so quick to keep us updated on friends who are sick or have passed on. She's also quick to lift your concerns up in prayer. She's had tremendous hardship in her life, but she exhibits such joy! Last year, on our bus ride to Louisville she was sharing stories with me. She made the statement, “I don't know how people cope without God in their life?” It was such a powerful statement to me and obviously, I didn't forget it. Lorraine's a wonderful friend and I miss her not being here. I was so disappointed when she said she couldn't come to the reunion. *I didn't know if I was going to be able to bring myself to play Bunco with you ladies in her absence.*

Like snowflakes, no two friendships are the same; each brings a unique beauty and joy to our lives. We all have acquaintances, casual friends, close friends, and what I like to call “heart” friends, that handful of individuals with whom we share our deepest selves and like us, Jesus had different circles of friends too. He ministered to the crowds, he spent significant time with the twelve disciples and he was closest to three in particular: Peter, James and John. He was a companion to the tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:15-17), as well as his dearly loved friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 11:20-32).

In our quiet solitude of prayer we can pour out our *deepest fears* and *desires* to the greatest friend we will ever know in Jesus. We can take pleasure in enjoying God by just being in his company. When we fellowship with God in prayer, we can then pray powerfully for our friends on earth. We can pray *for* them and *with* them. Perhaps that's the best way we can show we care. When someone is going through an extraordinarily tough time, a phone call or card can do wonders, but being lifted up in prayer is unmatched for the support and comfort it can give, just knowing that someone cares enough to take your hurts to our Heavenly Father.

As Ron reads the names of those we lost this year and remember those of years past, keep in mind they were more than acquaintances or companions. They were our friends. Friends who were willing to sacrifice and die for us and their country when they took a vow to protect America. As I close this message, never forget what Jesus told us, “*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13).