

Called According to His Purpose

By Carol Heckman



Staff Sergeant Bradley C. Beem served as a crew chief for Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), Fort Campbell, Kentucky. SSG Beem was killed on March 7, 1996, during a night training mission when the MH-47E helicopter he was crewing crashed near Russellville, Kentucky.

And we know
that God causes
all things to
work together
for good to those
who love God,
to those who are
called according
to His purpose.

Romans 8:28
(NASB)

Excerpts from a Mother's Journal

March 10, 1996

A soldier died Thursday, March 7, 1996, but the memories flooding my soul are of a bright, clever, smiling child that I loved from the moment I became aware of his conception. Bradley Charles entered this world on May 16, 1967. He was enthusiastic about life from the beginning — he walked at 9 months and had his first stitches before age two — always pushing the limits, the curfews, and his parents' panic buttons. Brad's life touched many people in his 28 years, 9 months on earth. He followed his oldest step-brother into a military career, entering the Army Reserves in 1984 as a high school junior. Brad had his priorities straight — he knew God as the author of all things, he loved his family, he proudly served his country and wore his uniform with dignity and respect for all it represented. To say that Brad will be missed is a profound

understatement. To say that he was loved is also too weak a statement, but the best our language offers. We thank God for sharing Brad with us, and we trust in His promise that for those who believe all things are for good. This we trust. But, for now, we feel a gaping absence that was once filled to overflowing by a wonderful son, grandson, brother, husband, daddy, friend, and soldier.

March 12, 1996

News of the accident was on national news, and we heard from people from all over the country. One especially memorable was from a girl in California who had met Brad at the National Youth Gathering in San Antonio in the 1980s when he helped her get back with her group.

March 23, 1996

Our memorial service at home was delayed, pending completion of the Army investigation of the crash. Pastor Duncan's sermon was well received by members of the Honor Guard from the Nightstalkers, many who were unchurched.

The Honor Squad and pallbearers were all from Brad's unit. They gathered in Shell Rock after the service, where our other three sons joined them. While there, our youngest son, Rick, was introduced to Jessica. (Rick and Jessica eventually married in 1999. Their daughter, Abbey, is a member of the Wisconsin Army Reserves.)

March 27, 1996

A service was held at Arlington National Cemetery with the full ceremony of horse-drawn caisson to bury the unidentified remains of the five soldiers who died. While

in Washington, D.C., we attended a Lenten Service at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Arlington and met Pastor Thomas Palke. The congregation placed Brad's name on their memorial roll.

April 12, 1996

Deep within the heart of me
there is a special peace,
Where thoughts and dreams are stored away
like treasured bits of lace.
The joys of motherhood are prized
and tucked away for each,
With limitless capacity,
fullness cannot reach.
So much is there because of you,
my prized and much-loved son.
And I am promised comfort
in the days yet to come.
But there was so much more
for you to do and you to be.
Why, oh, why did God call your name
and take you away from me?
We will meet again someday,
I trust that promise true.
You cannot return to me;
I will come to you.

June 19, 1996

In junior high school I memorized a quote credited to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. I have found these words echoing through my head many times through the years, increasingly so in the past three months.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

"Let us, then, be up and doing": Being busy helps, and doing provides some distraction and relief from grief.

"With a heart for any fate": Worry doesn't change what will be; grief doesn't change what has occurred.

"Still achieving, still pursuing": Continue to live and grow; your achievement continues to honor your deceased loved one.

"Learn to labor and to wait": Two valuable lessons — work, I've learned to do; patience, I'm still learning.

I know that my efforts at patience will be rewarded. Someday I'll know all I want to know. I expect I will find that the worries and concerns of this life are really insignificant events in the reality of eternity. The death of my son has resulted in my developing a much deeper empathy for Mary, Jesus' mother. We know she pondered many things regarding Him in life, but then to witness his gruesome death is overwhelming. It also instills a sense of the enormity of God's sacrifice for us. [Q](#)

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your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:1–4a ESV).

God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world loves me and He loves Thomas. God broke through into my heart to comfort me. His promises, made firm and secure with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, more real than the chair I'm sitting on, gave me a foundation on which to stand. Regardless of the outcome, God would remain with me, and He would never leave me or forsake me. He would walk with our family and help us to face whatever outcome was on the horizon.

I was finally able to speak with Tom about 36 hours after the crash. Praise God! He was safe. Tom was not in either of the helicopters involved in the accident. My fears subsided, and it took about a week for me to feel restored. I continue to pray for his safety. I can't wait to have him home again and to be able to hold him in my arms.

*To God be all the Glory!
My son is safe!*

While we are more than grateful Tom was not injured, we are deeply saddened for the families of the seven men whose lives were lost in this accident. Please pray for all these families and all the troops who devote their lives to protect our freedom. [Q](#)

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