

A Friend Never Forgotten

By Lisa Middleton

It's been a year since I walked in my front door and found my husband sitting in the living room chair severely distraught watching the news. I thought maybe he received the dreaded call that his sick Uncle had passed away. After asking what's wrong a cou-

ple of times, he finally choked out "Richard was killed today." I was confused - Richard? Then I looked at the TV and saw a picture of a police officer with Richard's face attached to it. It couldn't be real. I sat stunned. I watched as they ran the loop of Kelly being flown on the helicopter to Lau-

rel Hospital. She stopped, gave someone a hug, and started briskly walking to the hospital door. We wondered: did she have a chance to say goodbye?

My husband, Darrin, and Rich were best friends growing up. They were two peas in a pod. They rode bikes together after school every day. They played in the woods behind Richard's house on Dunnington Road - climbing trees and digging for old bottles. They went to prom and celebrated their graduation from High Point High School together. As they grew older, their interests took them on separate paths but they always kept in touch. It turns out, once Rich considered you a friend, you were always a friend. I was blessed to be counted as a friend when Darrin and I started dating. My favorite memory is of Rich sitting at our kitchen table closing out our holiday party 'til 3:00 a.m. just catching up on life's happenings. He was working on his paramedic certification. He surely had stories to tell as a paramedic and volunteer fire fighter.

After his death, so many people shared memories of Richard and two common themes emerged - he was a gregarious guy who liked to

crack jokes, make funny sounds, and do impressions. He was also a devoted public servant and loving husband and father. After volunteering for the Beltsville Volunteer Fire Department for 10 years, he added Prince George's County Police Officer to his call of service. He was stationed in Beltsville in 1998 and continued volunteering at the fire department. He married Kelly in 2000 and grew his family by two - Nicole and Lauren. They settled in a quaint New Windsor home and became part of another community.

If you live in Beltsville, you may not have known Rich but there's a good chance you remember his funeral. According to media reports, there were 3,000 people outside of St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Sellman Road (I estimated about 700 inside). They watched the casket arrive on a fire truck, listened to the bagpipers, and stood outside listening to the eulogy and service through speakers outside the church. From the church, the attendees drove to the funeral, single file, behind the fire truck carrying Rich's casket. We drove past the police department, the fire department on to Route 95, 495, then to Route 50. The highways were closed for us and people gathered along median strips, some waving, and some saluting.

I later saw video on TV of Kelly and her two girls in the funeral procession. Kelly made it through that day without collapsing. A hero in her own way, she made it through those days and even months since then. She told me each day is for her girls - helping them adjust to their new "normal."

When asked about his favorite memory of Rich, Darrin stated "definitely riding bikes everyday after school. We'd play the woods behind his house and climb trees. We'd climb these skinny trees all the way to the top, hang on as it dropped to the side and then let go. We played marbles on the sewer tops; played kick ball on Dunnington Road. There were a lot of kids ready to play."

With shared memories and a desire to honor Rich, his childhood friends have arranged for a *Funds for Friends Night* at **The Greene Turtle** in Laurel on June

30th. All are welcome to help support our friend and local hero at **The Greene Turtle** from 11:00 am until closing at 2:00 am on **July 1st**. The Greene Turtle will donate 10% of its sales from open to close to Nicole and Lauren Findley, Richard and Kelly's two young daughters.

Danny Delfo, long-time bartender at The Greene Turtle, grew up on Stonehall Drive in Calverton. He played baseball and football with Rich in the Calverton Rec leagues and then played football at St. John's CYO until high school. He says, "first and foremost, Richard is dearly missed, by not only his family, friends, and fellow Police Officers, but also by the community he so bravely served. As a childhood friend of Richard's, I feel it an honor for The Greene Turtle to hold a fundraiser that would help make things more comfortable for Kelly and the girls."

It was with bagpipes, 21-gun salute, color guard and helicopter fly-over that we bid farewell to a friend who liked to ride bikes and play sports and then became a hero. My husband kept saying "it's Richard, just Richard" - all innocence lost, the marbles left behind long ago to become a man who put himself in danger every day that he put his badge on. He became a hero for not only standing up for what he believed in, but for being a devoted husband, father, and friend. There isn't a day that goes by that we don't think about him. A police siren, a fire truck, a drive through Beltsville or Laurel, a picture of his contagious grin.... Please join us on **June 30th**. Even if you didn't know Rich personally, you can honor a man who fearlessly served his community and faithfully loved his family. We'll gather together to share memories and hopefully ease the ache that still settles in our hearts a year later.

If you can't make it to The Greene Turtle but would like to honor Richard's commitment to the Beltsville community and his family, you can send a check to Beltsville VFD 4911, Attn: Chief Schwartz, Prince George's Ave, Beltsville, MD, 20705. Make the checks payable to Beltsville VFD 4911 and in the memo line write Findley.

LENNY'S CONSTRUCTION

Trim work
Kitchen Installation
Power Washing
Staining & Painting
Shingles
Cabinet Installation
Step Installation & Repair
Roof Installation & Repair
Bathroom Remodeling
Bathroom Installation
Window & Door Replacement
Gutter Cleaning
Patios
Garages & Sheds Built
Framing Work
Siding Repair
Tile Work
All Kinds of Gravel

301-792-0668

Multi Home Garage Sale

June 27 from 8-3 and
June 28 from 8-1.

NO EARLYBIRDS!
11742 Ellington Drive,
Beltsville, MD 20705
301-595-2440

Ellington can be accessed from Muirkirk Road or Odell Road. Sale will include some furniture, household items, adult female clothing, jewelry, linens, etc. from four different households. In addition, homeowners will be selling their jewelry business stock at a 50% REDUCTION.



Emmanuel United Methodist Church
Rev. Daniel Mejia

11416 Cedar Lane ♦ Beltsville, Maryland 20705
(301) 937-7114 ♦ www.emmanuelumcbeltsville.net

COME AND WORSHIP!

9:00 AM Sunday
Contemporary Worship:

- ♦ *Ignite* praise band
- ♦ Children's moment
- ♦ Interactive worship
- ♦ Communion every week

11:00 AM Sunday
Traditional Worship:

- ♦ Choir & organist
- ♦ Traditional hymns
- ♦ Sign language Interpreter
- ♦ Communion on the first Sunday of the month

* *Nursery care provided at all services*

COME AND STUDY!

- ♦ Sunday School for all ages, including adult Bible studies (10:10 AM)
- ♦ English classes during the week



Beltsville Library Hours



Mon. - Wed.: 10 a.m.-9 p.m.
Thurs.: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Friday: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.