

5-1-2012

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Recommended Citation

Orsburn, Sharon (2012) "The Reason I Write," *Forces*: Vol. 2012 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2012/iss1/3>

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The Reason I Write

SHARON ORSBURN

My son, John, died on May 5, 2007. Or so it says on the plaque marking his remains at the National Cemetery in Dallas, Texas. The truth is that he died on a battlefield in Iraq in 2004. It could be said that his spirit was mortally wounded then and his body came home, without a scratch, to die.

Since then I have come in contact with so many parents who have buried their children. And one thing is certain: this loss binds us together in a powerful way. It seems to make no difference whether the child is a senior citizen whose parents have outlived them, or a stillborn child who never got to take a breath, the loss is monumental. As one dear friend put it, "The death of my son is the defining moment in my life."

John was a victim of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. And I believe PTSD deaths take this powerful grief to an even more horrific level. Our children served their country and came home to us broken and haunted by the very incidents for which they had been decorated.

Something surprising happened to me almost immediately upon finding out that John was dead. I began writing what some have graciously called poetry. I had always written a little but this event threw open the flood gates to a whole new type of writing.

On the day I went to the coroner's office to hear the words that changed my life forever I came home and composed a piece that I would read at my child's funeral. I'm sure I was in shock, but I calmly stood up and looked into the tear stained faces of the people who loved him and read an ode that I had just penned for him.

The poems have continued to come to me. Most of them have been about grief and healing. I have noticed that as time goes by they have become lighter...an indication of my own healing for which I am grateful.

So, I have come to believe that the poems are given to me so that I may heal. I hope that as you read my offerings you find some sort of healing, too.

In a recent note to a mother whose young veteran son stepped in front of a train just hours after being released from a VA Hospital I said:

"I will continue to stand at this end of our mutual path and encourage you to take one small step at a time until there is some degree of peace in your broken heart."

That is my hope for all who grieve.