

## **Scott Alan McDonald 5/24/77 ~ 9/13/12**

After graduating from Belpre HS in 1995, Scott Alan McDonald took an oath to uphold the dignity and honor of the United States Army. For 15 years, he served honorably in the uniform of his country and was proud to serve as a UH- 60 Blackhawk mechanic and Crew Chief for a medivac unit.

Bosnia, Panama, Iraq, and Afghanistan were just a few of the war torn countries that he dedicated his life to making a difference in. In his career he experienced heartache, unimaginable violence, death, and the overall devastating effects of war. He saw many of his fellow soldiers give their lives in the ultimate sacrifice to their country and narrowly escaped with his own life intact.

He loved his country and what the American Flag stands for. He was a brother in arms to thousands of fellow soldiers and a truly remarkable man that never met a stranger. Scott had larger than life expectations for his daughters Yasmin and Reize. Because of his commitment to family and Honor, on Jan. 9, 2011 I married him.

On 30 April 2011, Scott's career with the Army had come full circle and he hung up his uniform for good. He began seeking treatment for Back and shoulder pain at the Chalmers P Whyllie Ambulatory Care Center in Columbus, Ohio. Almost immediately he was placed on medication. Starting with ibuprofen, gabapentin, and meloxicam. After only a few visits he was referred to Mental Health where he was then diagnosed with Severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, adding several anti-depression and anxiety meds such as Zoloft and Valium. And this is where the roller coaster of drugs came into play.

Everytime Scott came home from an apt. He would have different meds. Progressively over the year and half that he was receiving treatment, the medications changed many times often adding new meds, changing dosages and recommending that he take the meds differently than the printed dosaging. We researched the drugs online and saw that there were many dangerous interactions involved with the medications he was on, but being that Scott had been conditioned to follow orders, he believed fully that his Dr.'s were doing all they could to help him. With every apt. the medication changed the side effects changed, and Scott himself was changing.

On 12 September 2012 Scott attended another of his scheduled appointments. This time they had added a powerful narcotic, Percocet. This opiate drug was much different than the vicodine that he had previously been taking. The directions on the bottle said to not exceed 3000 mg of acetaminophen. Scott followed the orders. At 0730 on the 13th, less than 24 hrs after he was prescribed the Percocet, I found Scott on the couch. He was cold and unresponsive. I tried all I could and EMS also arrived but it was far too late.

for Scott. At 35 years old, this husband and father was gone! He left behind a wife, 2 daughters and many friends and family members who loved him very much.

Now the question is why? Why was this mans life tragectly cut short. It is well know how America's wounded warriors are being victimized by the huge backlog in their VA claims. Forcing families to wait months and in most cases Years to receive benefits that the earned. Nonetheless the Department of Veterans Affairs states that they are incredibly proud of the shrinking backlog, that it has begun issuing bonus to the buraucrats who meet the Departments numerical goals in case load reduction.

Keeping our men and woman doped up to keep them quiet and happy is not treatment. It is cruelty and torture and in too many cases It's manslaughter! For many American Service Members the VA is utilized as free healthcare to those who earned it thru their dedication and commitment to honor their country. In far too many cases , these service members become lost in the system and simply become a number and no longer viewed as productive members of society.

Tests that can save lives are not being performed. A simple " I am in pain" is a good enough evaluation to prescribe painkillers. And a patient claiming that a medication isn't working well enough , is grounds to change the medication.

In the civilian sector is routine and often manditory to preform blood tests on patients that are just starting treatment or have been receiving treatment for a prolonged amount of time. I learned this thru speaking to Medical professionals at various local treatment facilities. This is how I learned about the LFT or liver function test commonly refered to as the Liver Enzyme Test. Being that the liver is responsible for a multitude of tasks including the metobolization on medications like narcotics but filtering out the toxins that are left behind it got me thinking, " Did doctors do this test for Scotty"?

So, I asked them! And they responded, but not with what I had hoped for.

" Liver function tests are NOT routine in the treatment of out veterans, and that my husbands healthcare was handled and well managed "

I was not only sickened by their response, but that day, I decided that no more shall die! Had they done the simple test, they would have discovered that due to the overwhelming amount of medications that Scott had been exposed to, his liver was inflamed and vurtually dying. But instead, it was only discovered by the coroner. I have no doubt that this test would have saved my husbands life, and Scott would be here today to watch his kids grow up to be beautiful young woman.

I have no doubt that a large percentage of the veteran overdose cases could have been prevented by this test. But instead they met a similar demise. Father's are gone, never to walk their daughters down the isle on her wedding day, or to throw a football with their sons. Children left without a mother to embrace them, and simply kiss the boo boo's..

There is nothing that I can say or do to bring Scott or the countless others back. There is nothing I can say or do to take away the pain we as family members have experienced. But there is so much that you, as Leaders can do. The regulations that involve our veterans need to be evaluated and changed. The irresponsible distribution of narcotics to our heroes needs to STOP!!

So I Heather Renae McDonald, the proud wife of an American Hero who was taken too soon, stand here before you today to DEMAND that you take better care of our veterans. I stand before you to speak as an advocate for the countless widows, widowers, and children of those who lost a fight they didn't sign a contract to fight. I will stand with the many, and for those who have not found their voice to speak out, I vow to be your voice.

Together, we can still save thousands of lives. So I beg you, as the Leaders that have the ability and power to make these changes to do so.

If we do not act quickly, I fear that many more lives will be lost due to the malpractice and grotesque lack of proper care that the VA hands out.

When they signed that contract, they gave their bodies to their country, now you owe them their lives. These men and women deserve so much better. They deserve to live because they were committed and selflessly chose to wear the uniform of the UNITED STATES MILITARY .