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In July 2001, a Californian bought a bed-and-breakfast in Port Angeles. Two months later, terrorists struck the World Trade Center and Pentagon. As a result, tourism took a hit nationwide.

A decade later, an Afghan detonated an explosive device under the Humvee in which her son was a passenger, killing him. He joined the military ranks of The Fallen or Fallen Heroes – and her mother, Betsy Reed Schultz, vowed, “Though I would grieve, I would find something worthwhile to do with my life and find a way so that Joseph’s death would not be the focus of his dying, but rather his living. I will love and miss him every day for the rest of my life.”

Days after his death, Schultz decided to convert the bed-and-breakfast to a house for six-day respites for families of The Fallen, known as Gold Star Veteran Families – the first house created for that purpose in the United States.

That is her mission, which has taken longer to accomplish than planned. Sometime this year, the House will welcome its first three families – the culmination of more than 14,000 hours of volunteer labor and donated materials, including community businesses that have given time and services as well as grants and donations, all commanded by a mother focused on making Captain Joseph House a reality.

Now 67, “I plan to devote the rest of my life to creating and maintaining Captain Joseph House and Foundation,” she said. “Before each of his deployments, he would tell me, ‘I don’t plan on dying, but I am ready to die for my country. If I die, don’t die with me. You must continue to live. If you don’t, then my loss is in vain.’ It’s a promise I made to Joseph and I intend to keep it.”

If creating Captain Joseph House was a military operation or federal project, once all funding was approved, then the project would begin and be finished within an allotted time. But a non-profit foundation manages this non-governmental one, so the project is dependent on contributions and volunteers – guided by Schultz.

She was born in New Jersey; her family ultimately settled in California. Schultz earned her teaching credential in elementary education. “My career focused on ensuring individuals with developmental disabilities received residential support, medical and educational services needed to live quality lives. I worked in both private and non-profit settings and then worked for the State of California, where I was part of a team creating curriculum and training programs for 26,000 care providers in licensed homes for individuals with developmental disabilities.

"I always wanted to have a bed-and-breakfast and would save that dream for when I was retired or older. Joseph and I often spent weekends or vacations to tour through inns for sale. Having been pushed in a stroller as a child or dragged along through his grade-school years, he wasn't at all surprised when he came home from Israel to return to a bed-and-breakfast.

"I was in Port Angeles one time, in 1969 with a bicycle group." In 2001 a friend told her about a bed-and-breakfast for sale in Port Angeles. "When I first saw the Tudor Inn, I told the owner, 'Call your Realtor and take it off the market.'" It was built by an Englishman in 1910 in the Tudor style, and "looked like my grandmother's house in New Jersey." The inn, 1108 S. Oak St., had eight bedrooms and seven bathrooms. Schultz operated it as a sole proprietor.

"When I first arrived in Port Angeles, I contacted many businesses and became active in the community. If one wants to be accepted and recognized as a team player, you need to get involved and offer your skills and talents." Those connections resulted in donations that are helping create Captain Joseph House.

Meanwhile, her only child, Joseph, was in his 20s. Schultz was a single parent, and Joseph's father died in 2016. Joseph graduated from the University of Oregon in 1997. He worked for the governor in California, then worked in Washington, D. C., where Joseph represented California's governor. He then accepted an appointment with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) during the Clinton administration. Joseph then worked on an Israeli kibbutz; he was in Tel Aviv on 9/11. "That 9/11 attack was the catalyst for Joseph to contact the Army recruiter in Port Angeles."

He completed Army Officer Candidate School (OCS) and received a commission as an intelligence officer in 2003. Joseph was a paratrooper and qualified as an Army Ranger, then earned the right to wear the distinctive Green Beret. He served two tours in Iraq and was four months into his first tour in Afghanistan in 2011.

"Despite receiving bed-and-breakfast awards for five consecutive years, it was time to close the doors." A bankruptcy was discharged (settled) on May 2, 2011. However, Schultz retained ownership of Tudor Inn, where she still lived. "I could not imagine a more horrific experience. Emails from Joseph were full of encouragement: that my life would go on and I would find my way."

Then, 27 days after bankruptcy's end, Sunday, Memorial Day, "I was making plans to meet with others to place American flags at cemeteries." Later, Schultz visited a friend, while a black SUV with two military officers was at Tudor Inn looking for Schultz. "The whole time I was with my friend, my cell phone was ringing, ringing, ringing. Finally, I answered one of the calls. It was my neighbor calling to say that there were two officers who had stopped to see me. And I said, 'Oh, they're probably looking for a room because I had always given discounts to military families.' But she replied, 'I don't think that is what this is about.' So, all the way back to the house, I knew.

"When I got there, they were just driving up again. I stood at the window and watched them get out of their SUV. I watched them coming to the front door, and I felt as though they were walking slowly and it would be forever before they would get to my door. I remember seeing World War II movies with my father where a Western Union messenger would ride up on a bicycle to deliver the death news.

“Before they knocked, I opened the door, and they asked for my name. I knew the outcome, but I was hoping for a different ending – that their coming here was all a mistake. But I knew they had an envelope for me.”

The mission of the captain and chaplain was over. Schultz’s brother and his girlfriend and a neighbor comforted her. She curled up in a rocking chair – Joseph’s favorite – all night. “When Joseph was small, I used to rock him to sleep; as he grew up, we would use rocking-chair time to talk. When we could no longer share the same chair, we had two rocking chairs. As an adult, Joseph always had a rocking chair in his home. As I rocked throughout that first night, I begged to have another bankruptcy, as it wasn’t the worst thing after all. Joseph was killed, and I had only memories of him to soothe me that night as I cried – there would be no more rocking-chair talks.”

The day after Joseph died, arrangements were made for Schultz, Joseph’s grandmother, aunt and uncle to go to Dover, Delaware, to meet Joseph’s casket arriving by plane from Afghanistan.

Captain Joseph Schultz, 36, was a detachment commander, and that night led a four-Humvee convoy in rural Afghanistan. In Joseph’s Humvee was Staff Sgt. Gene Braxton, Staff Sgt. Martin Apolinar, Sgt. Aaron Blasjo and his dog, Hunter, as well as Zaki, an Afghan interpreter. A 14-year-old Afghan waited until Joseph’s Humvee was over his Improvised Explosive Device (IED), then detonated it via a key fob. The explosion threw Braxton from the Humvee. He was the only survivor.

While at Dover, Schultz already envisioned a foundation to create Captain Joseph House. “I was already typing up protocols. I could not pull myself away. Calling it ‘Captain Schultz House’ would be too formal; Captain Joseph House seems friendlier.”

With Joseph’s death, Schultz was presented with a gold star lapel pin. Beginning in World War 1, blue-star flags were displayed in windows to show a family member’s active military service; if that person died in a war, the star changed to gold. “To me wearing a gold star is an honor because it represents my loss of a son who was willing to give his life to preserve our country.”

Two months after Joseph’s death, the board of directors of Captain Joseph House Foundation met for the first time by conference call. The Foundation is a “one-of-a-kind” 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation which owns Captain Joseph House. “This Foundation didn’t come from an existing recognized need or based on research. It came from a belief, as a result of my loss, that Gold Star Veteran Families would find comfort, solace, common understanding and a bond through gathering in small groups of families. The makeup of the board represents people from around the country. This is more than a Port Angeles project.”

Two of the first two key volunteers were Charles Smith, a local architect, and Bill Feeley, the Foundation’s general contractor. “We have both paid licensed contractors for portions of the remodel as well as volunteers working one day a week since June 2013.” Smith and Feeley sought bids.

“You’re always fundraising. We have 30 events a year. You cannot raise funds unless you raise awareness, and our event volunteers spend hours sharing information about Captain Joseph House, the Foundation and Gold Star Veteran Families, who will come for respite. Once the House and landscaping are finished, the focus of fundraising will be for operations, bringing the families and sustaining the program. Currently the volunteer bank lists 400 volunteers. We have a core group of 40 with many of them working every week at the House and office while others work an event or two a month.”

Schultz is currently the only salaried employee. "Once the House is open, both paid and volunteer staff will accommodate the steady flow of families. Additional volunteers and paid staff will be hired and trained. There are grants available once the House is operating and no longer being remodeled. Families returning home will tell those in their home towns about Captain Joseph House. We believe that will be one of the more effective marketing tools for raising sustaining funds."

The Foundation has received grants from local banks and other businesses as well as city and county organizations. Thus far, \$320,000 has been spent to remodel the House, in addition to expenses of operating a business. The electrical, plumbing, insulation, security and fire systems, drywall and interior painting are done. The exterior painting is nearly complete. Contractors and volunteers are scheduling work to refinish the fir floors, install an elevator, finish the kitchen and bathrooms, install lighting and plumbing fixtures, lay tile floors, finish exterior decking and continue with landscaping. The Foundation was just awarded \$225,000 from the state's capital construction budget – a competitive process – which will complete the House. Fundraising to finish landscaping will continue over the next few months.

"We can open this year, once the House and landscaping are complete and program dollars are available to operate the House and bring families here."

Once open, Gold Star Veteran Families will be notified and provided information about the House and procedures to apply for respite. "Families qualify because their Fallen loved one served and died while in combat in the U. S. armed forces or died as a direct result of injuries sustained during combat service since Sept. 11, 2001, -- the day Joseph contacted his recruitment office to register for OCS. Families from all branches are eligible."

Every Sunday, up to three families will be met at an area airport by staff and driven to the House for their first family dinner. Three vehicles will transport families during the respite week, which ends Friday. The House will be open March through January.

"Captain Joseph House is the first family-to-family respite house in the country. This all-expense-paid respite will provide an opportunity for taking a break from this life-changing loss, to experience an environment where new friendships can take root and draw strength from a common experience in the peace and quiet of this home away from home. Families will prepare meals with staff; enjoy activities, such as hiking, kayaking, beach walking, reading, sipping tea in the gazebo or just sitting in one of the many rocking chairs throughout the House." A "nanny program" will be available one night each week, where volunteers will be ready to watch any children.

"The House will be staffed with trained paid staff and volunteers around the clock. Access to medical, social and clergy services will be available as needed. Each room accommodates different-sized families and respite covers room, board, recreation and airfare. Each room has a donation value: Apolinar Family Room hosts eight (\$10,000), Blasjo Family Room hosts seven (\$7,500) and Braxton Family Room hosts six (\$5,000). The House is licensed for up to 16 immediate family members each week."

A local family has offered Schultz rural acreage it owns in the Upper Midwest for another House. Schultz envisions a total of five around the country. Just the way Joseph would want it.