

## SGT xxxx xxxxx Memorial Meditation

7 May 20xx

Schofield Barracks, HI

Just like the large, sweeping rainbows that occasionally paint our Hawaiian sky, every once in a while someone steps inside our world to add rich, vibrant color to our lives. SGT xxxx xxxx, whom we memorialize today, was this type of person. He took the paintbrush, as it were, and with each stroke added meaningful detail to each of our imperfect canvases. His tragic death leaves a massive void which cannot be filled.

Xxxxx was admired for many reasons, but his doggedness and grit stand out above the rest. No matter what, he never gave up. He charged hard all the time and refused to quit. I find it rather remarkable that his last great feat was pushing himself through the finish line of the Army Physical Fitness Test two-mile run. It seems that he understood and took to heart the following Biblical question: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”<sup>1</sup>

Xxxxx’s squad and platoon affectionately called him “Cookie Monster” because of his deep scratchy voice that could be heard from long distances—whether leading PT in garrison, or maneuvering his Soldiers during field training exercises. Unlike the greedy character on Sesame Street, however, xxxx was quick to share his figurative plate of cookies—whether that meant coming in on a weekend to help others improve their PT scores or giving up his snivel gear in the field to a freezing Soldier. Putting others’ needs before his own, he was the epitome of a selfless servant.

Finally, xxxx was never one to back down from a challenge. When others would protest or complain about a seemingly impossible task, he would cheerfully embrace the

opportunity and encourage others to join him. His contagious personality and positivity always seemed to increase morale.

Today as we reflect on his death, we seek answers to life's most difficult questions. While asking why is a natural response to tragedy and can lessen our suffering to some degree, it can also frustrate us and obstruct our view of the peace and understanding we seek. My friends, the tragedy of this day will be multiplied if we allow death to have the final say—if we allow ourselves to remain unchanged by the light and hope that God provides.

The grief and pain we feel today need not debilitate us. In fact, one preacher asserts that “sorrow and suffering carve cavities in the soul that will become later reservoirs of joy.”<sup>ii</sup> The Psalmist adds, “...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”<sup>iii</sup> Yes, the sun will come out tomorrow!<sup>iv</sup> But in order to clear away the cobwebs and sorrow, we have to open the figurative blinds and curtains. A simple, yet useful step we can take towards healing is remembering.

As one author explains, “Remembering is an act of resurrection, each repetition a vital layer of mourning in memory of those we are sure to meet again.”<sup>v</sup> The experiences each of us shared with xxxxx are now priceless and treasured recollections that can and will allow the light to dispel our darkness and gloom.

In addition to remembering, it may also be helpful to look inward and ponder: to reflect on life's meaning and to resolve to live more purposefully—so that we, like xxxxx, may be the means of bringing joy and happiness to others.

As we honor and pay tribute to xxxxx in this ceremony today, I pray that our faith will be increased. I pray that we will be encouraged by the truth that “death is a mere

comma, not an exclamation point<sup>vi</sup>...[and that] the closing of a grave is but the closing of a door which later will be flung open with rejoicing.”<sup>vii</sup>

My prayer today is that God will bless each of us in our journeys toward peace and understanding. As we bid a physical farewell to xxxxx, may we honor him through our continued service and devotion and realize that we are never separated by love.

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<sup>i</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:24.

<sup>ii</sup> Maxwell, Neal A. *Meek and Lowly* (Deseret Book, 1987).

<sup>iii</sup> Psalms 30:5.

<sup>iv</sup> “Tomorrow.” *Annie*. Columbia Pictures: June 18, 1982.

<sup>v</sup> Cobb, Nancy H. *In Lieu of Flowers: A Conversation for the Living* (Pantheon, 2002).

<sup>vi</sup> Maxwell, Neal A. *Shine as Lights in the World*. Annual World General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City, UT: April 2, 1983.

<sup>vii</sup> Maxwell, Neal A. *All Hell is Moved*. Brigham Young University Devotional. Provo, UT: November 8, 1977.