



A Life Given: A Prayer Answered

AUTHORED BY Lisa Freeman



Matthew's flag-draped coffin. Then, the procession home to Matthew's cherished Richmond Hill – a miracle response of a grieving community with people lining the route for 17 miles. 17 miles... He was honored with two remarkable funerals and laid to rest in Annapolis, his beloved alma mater, the Naval Academy.

My sister's high school classmates heard of her nephew's death. They raised money to help the Afghan children to honor Matthew's request.

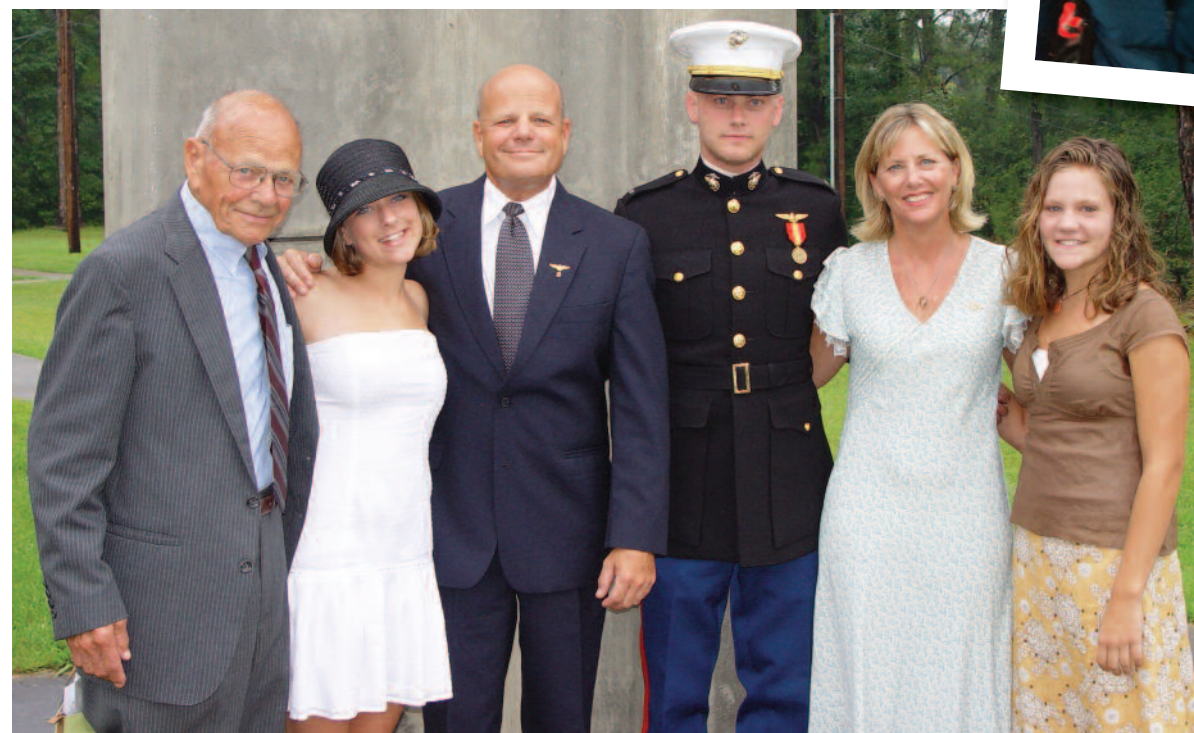
The \$12,000 they raised helped build 9 libraries and give over 2,000 children access to books.

One of these classmates heard more in Matthew's request and contacted me about a project that would be national in scope and international in reach. I remembered Matthew's message. It became God's message to me. I had been in prayer for a year about where God wanted me after I retired. Matthew left me a mission in his last words. I could see his smiling face looking down at these children giving them hope.

I am out of my comfort zone with this, but I hear God speaking to me. I hear Matthew saying loudly "I gave this to you, Mom – a chance to move on and do something wonderful for the world." That is what I'm going to do. I'm going to make that effort on Matthew's behalf – for the children of the world.

The Matthew Freeman Project: Pens and Paper for Peace will help bring school supplies to children in countries where armed conflict has disrupted their education. I plan to launch the project nationally Memorial Day week. I need support and am asking for contributions to get it started.

His was not a life lost. It was a life given. A prayer answered.



Matthew was coming home! He had been gone for a year and a half in Okinawa and he was coming home for a short visit before deploying to Afghanistan. Friends from around the country came to see him. Everyone was excited. He lit up our lives.

The last time I saw him, he and his childhood sweetheart had just secretly gotten married anticipating a church wedding they planned upon his return. He gave me his signature bear hug, pressed a coin into my hand with Ephesians 6:11-13 and said, "You don't have to worry about me Mom. I'm wearing the armor of God."

A few days after his arrival in Afghanistan he called home and said, "Mom the kids are so cute and the people are so nice. These kids would rather have pens and paper than food and water. What can you get going for a fundraiser as quickly as you can and get stuff over here?" I told him I'd do what I could, handed the phone to his Dad and tucked that thought away to discuss with my students the first day of school.

Days later school began with the transformers blowing out. With no electricity all communications were by word of mouth. The whole day had a certain strangeness about it, administrators walking

in and out of classrooms to give us instructions. I had introduced myself to my students with "It's my last first day of school." I was retiring at the end of the year. I told them about Matthew's request for pens and paper for the Afghan children.

"The kids would rather have pens and paper than food and water..."

*– Matthew Freeman's last call to his mother before being killed in combat
January 19, 1980–August 7, 2009*

Minutes later my principal approached me and asked me to come with her for a minute. I told her "No." I knew what she would tell me. She tried again. When I refused she started to cry and I collapsed in the hall screaming. I remember being carried to the office where Marines officially notified me that my son had been killed in action. My world had just changed forever.

The next week was a blur of activity as the house filled with family, friends, and military liaisons. Questions were asked and answered, arrangements made with the clergy as I sat staring at the crumpled form of my daughter-in-law, trying to absorb the reality of the loss of my son.

One morning I was told to dress to go to the airport to retrieve his body. A limousine picked us up. I remember people along side the road. With lightning all around, the plane landed and my son-in-law, who accompanied Matthew's body home, disembarked in full dress uniform. People stood at attention. My husband stepped forward and saluted

how you can help...

Contributions can be made to

**Capt. Matthew Freeman
Memorial Fund
Pens and Paper For Peace**



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