

## **LOSS and LIVING A LIFE OF NO REGRETS**

By Cynthia Brian

It had been a relaxing two days without access to any technology including phone service celebrating our son's birthday on the beautiful warm waters of Lake Shasta. As we neared dock, my mom pulled out her cell phone to check in with the family at home. It was immediately evident that all was not right. With tears streaming down her face, she announced that my sister's husband had just died. Knowing that my sister would be occupied, I dialed the cell phone of her daughter, Amber. Amber was named after the amber lights on a fire truck. Her dad, after all, was a firefighter. Actually he was the Chief of Suisun Fire District.

We spoke for a few minutes when she got a call on her police radio. "Aunt Cynthia, I have to go. There's been a shooting in Cordelia." Amber is CSI-a crime scene investigator. "You can't go, Amber. Your dad just died." Her sister, Lacy, is a paramedic. I prayed that she was not dispatched to the shooting.

My brother-in-law, Terry Blanc, had dedicated 38 years of his life to firefighting. He was a volunteer firefighter for many years until his unstoppable allegiance to saving lives and property earned him a paid position as an engineer. He was promoted up the ranks quickly to lieutenant, then captain, until finally he was named Fire Chief in 1999. For the thirty-one years I knew him as the devoted husband of

my sister, Debbie, his fire boots, helmet, and turn outs were always at the ready at the front door. Debbie was a committed Fire Chief's wife, always cooking and delivering delicious food to the weary. There was never a fire that blazed without the fearsome foursome family Blanc being the first on scene.

The shooting in Cordelia turned out to be a very close friend of the family, a 22 year old young man, Matt Garcia. Matt was one of the most popular young men in the town of Fairfield, California. He was also one of the youngest elected politicians in the state of California, having been elected to the city council at 21. When Lacy was Homecoming Queen, he had been King. My mom loved Matt and believed he had the potential to clean up the crime and the gangs that ravaged the once bucolic city. He reminded my mom and sister of our brother, David, who had been killed in a tractor accident at age 16. They both had the same ambition to help others. Matt's dream was to be mayor as he recruited kids to become active on the youth commission. He was a civic leader with pride in his community and a desire to honestly serve the public. As mourners were stunned at the shooting, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger issued a \$50,000 reward for the arrest of those responsible which was later quadrupled from other sources.

These were indeed very sad times.

Terry, the Fire Chief, and Matt, the City Councilman, died within one hour of one another. Terry was 62. Matt was 22. The funeral and memorial services for both were a true

celebration of their dedication to service. Streets were closed for the parade of fire trucks, emergency personnel in full uniform formed a channel of salutes, politicians and supporters from around the state arrived to honor these men who had given so much to a community.

What struck me the most was that both Terry and Matt had lived their lives in the moment and to the fullest. Although different in approaches, they both had followed their hearts with work that was meaningful despite the obstacles. As a young rising star, Matt had inspired other youth to take the high road. His life was taken much too early by thugs who didn't dare to dream. Terry had saved many lives during his lifetime and passed his love for service not only to his daughters, but to the hundreds of young men and women he mentored through the fire department.

The community has lost two priceless public servants. They lived lives of no regrets. They both died too young. Neither has died in vain.

Live a life of no regret. We all believe we have more time. We don't. It is later than you think. There are no tomorrows. We only have today. Live in the moment and cherish the people around you. NOW.

My deepest condolences and blessings to the families, friends, and loved ones of both Terry Blanc and Matt Garcia. You will not be forgotten.

Thank you for your devotion to making the world a better place.

A memorial fund is available at Be the Star You Are!:

<http://www.bethestaryouare.org/TerryBlanc.html>

***Cynthia Brian** is the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!® charity empowering women, families, and youth through improved literacy, positive media, and tools for living. She is the proud mother of a son who is a Fire Captain and a daughter who is a caring volunteer as well as the honored aunt to several outstanding nieces and a nephew who are public servants. [www.cynthiabrian.com](http://www.cynthiabrian.com), [www.bethestaryouare.org](http://www.bethestaryouare.org).*