

30 August 2007

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Buck,

My name is Skip Ripley and I recently departed from the Coast Guard Cutter Campbell after serving onboard from Feb. 2004 to June 2007. I was a Deck Officer that worked on the bridge and with many crewmembers. I was the OOD on the ship when word of the loss of Russell came to the ship and I coordinated the efforts from our ship with the emergency that ensued. I was personally very shaken over the loss of Russ as we worked together every day and I was given your address by the Captain at the time so I could write to you about your son. Please accept my apology for not writing to you sooner, but it was and is very painful to do so as I am sure your mourning process can attest to.

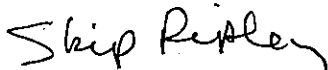
Your son Russ was a good man. Time and again while he was performing his duty on the bridge ensuring safe navigation and other duties, he could always be counted on for superior service. I remember coming into a small harbor on an island off of Columbia and Russ and I were performing the navigation on the chart. He and I directed the Captain to make adjustment to his course so as to keep the ship safe from shoal water (and we were getting dangerously close). In Russ's quiet and assured way he made sure we were all safe and the Captain was personally very thankful for his help that day as he patted him on the back and said "great job." During that same trip, your son was instrumental in stopping 10,000 pounds of cocaine as a coxswain of the small boat and as a boarding law enforcement team member...he kept our country safe by arming himself and enforcing military standards and the law enforcement regulations incumbent within the Coast Guard. Russ was very brave. Not one time in the several years I knew and worked closely with him did he ever utter a word of discontent regarding the performance of his duty or any arduous task he was asked to perform or lead. In his quiet way he would say "Yes Sir", and calmly walk off to do boarding's, help navigate the ship or command the small boat for search and rescue and law enforcement duties.

Russ was a very self assured man very typical of the area he comes from in the Mid-West (exceptionally hard working, God fearing and quiet). It stands as a great testament to his upbringing regarding his concern for others, performance of his duties as a Non-Commissioned Officer in the Armed Forces of his country as well as his trust in the Almighty. I being a Baptist, was always quietly talking to others about their beliefs, not in an intrusive way, but the bonding that occurs when men of religion talk amongst themselves and serve in the Armed Forces. Russ was a Lutheran, as he told me, and we would have theological conversations on those long watches on the bridge. I was always inspired by his quiet manner and the reverence he gave to his beliefs. He believed in God and had no problem applying the Lords principles in his treatment of others and his demeanor. His faith was important to him and it showed. I never saw him use his authority or his "power" over people in a negative way. He was compassionate and principled in the way he lived his life.

Many of us were affected by his sudden loss. But, as we all know whom believe in the Almighty...The Lord wanted him more than we could hold on to him...and he called his son home. I hope and pray that the Lord's love will assuage your bereavement of the loved and lost in the hope that we will all be reunited in his Holy Kingdom.

Russell Buck was and is a good man. I am a better man for having known him and so are several other men he served with. As I fight back the tears composing this letter I cherish the memory of your dear son. I will forever remember Russell standing over the chart table doing "the king's business" and seeing him give that slight grin he had when he would chuckle about this or that and the clam he instilled in all of us with his quiet assured ways. A man of few words whom all of us who knew him, and a man of profound action. A man to be followed and respected. We will always remember him, his shipmates, in silence and in prayer. May God Bless you and your Family. My prayers have been with you following the loss of Russ. If you ever wish to call me or write to me I will do so forthwith. If I am ever out that way, I would like to come visit you with my wife and daughter and see were you laid Russ to rest, to pay my respects to that young man and his Family.

In his Service,



Skip Ripley, CPO, USCG
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