



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 4, 2019

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## **The Goodness of America**

### **Strangers Attend Funerals of Veterans**

Strangers came out to show their support at the funerals of two veterans, both of whom had no family members to attend, in two different states.

Jonathan Whitt, who served in the Army at Fort Riley in Kansas between 2005 and 2007, passed away on September 5 at just 31 years old. His funeral was held in Brown County, Wisconsin, where he lived, but Whitt had no family to attend his funeral. Breitbart News reported that his mother and stepfather passed away years ago, and the veteran was estranged from the rest of his family.

When word spread that Whitt had no family to attend his funeral, members of the community, including fellow veterans, came to the funeral on September 27 to pay their respects.

“When you serve, when you go to basic training and serve with a group of individuals, it becomes a worldwide camaraderie,” Joe Aulik of Brown County Veterans Services told CNN. “We served our country and we love what we do and we love each other.”

Meanwhile, in Sarasota, Florida, thousands of strangers also turned up at the funeral of a deceased Army veteran who had no family members to attend his funeral on October 1.

Edward K. Pearson, 80, served in the Army from 1962 to 1964. When he died in Naples, Florida, on August 31, no one came forward to claim his remains. Despite their best efforts, social workers could not reach the veteran’s adult children.

Originally, the funeral director at Legacy Options, Michael Hoyt, and another veteran were the only ones expected to attend Pearson’s funeral. But Hoyt decided to post a notice in the local newspaper about the funeral in the hopes that some would find the time to pay their respects. The notice read, “This Veteran has no immediate family all are welcome to attend.”

Hoyt could never have predicted the response that notice would receive. It was shared on social media thousands of times, and Americans responded in droves. Nearly 4,000 people attended Pearson’s funeral at Sarasota National Cemetery, where he was buried with military honors, Fox News reported.

One attendee, Ed Lyons III, a veteran and assistant director at Sarasota National Cemetery, said all veterans deserve to be honored in their deaths. “It tugs at your heart because the things that veterans do for our country, what they sacrifice. You don’t want to think of anyone being alone or laid to rest without anyone being there to honor them,” said Lyons.

### **A Bright Spot During a Dark Time**

As Kevin Butcher of Milford, Ohio, prepared for a difficult day, one stranger showed him kindness when he needed it most, Fox News reported.

Butcher was picking out clothing with his wife, Sherri, for his father’s upcoming funeral when he realized that neither one of them knew how to tie a tie. As he searched for a tie in a local Walmart, he spotted another man in the aisle who happened to be wearing a tie.

“I said, ‘Excuse me, sir, but my father had passed away and I don’t know how to tie a tie. Would you mind?’ He didn’t hesitate,” Kevin said.



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The stranger, Howell Hackler, tied the tie Butcher intended to purchase so that it was ready to be worn on the day of the funeral.

Sherri posted the encounter on her Facebook page. She recounted that Hackler had to retie the tie several times to get the length just right. In the process, the two men talked and joked with one another. When Hackler was done, he shook Butcher's hand, pulled him in for a hug, and instructed Sherri to "take good care of him" as he walked away.

For Hackler, the fleeting moment was just another opportunity to help others, something that is in his nature to do. "If I find somebody that I can help, they want help, I'll be glad to help them. That's what I've done all my life. Why change?" said Hackler.

But for the Butchers, the encounter was a much-needed show of compassion during a particularly dark time.

Sherri was so touched by Hackler's kindness that she posted their story on social media in the hopes of reconnecting with him.

"He really touched both of us on a really, really hard day," Sherri later told WKRC.

Within 24 hours, they found Hackler and were reunited by Local 12 News. The Butchers wanted to thank Hackler once more for what he did.

But the story does not end there. When Sherri and Kevin arrived at the funeral on September 25, they were shocked to see Hackler in attendance, waiting for them.

Sherri later posted on her Facebook page, "There are just no words to explain how Kevin and I felt this morning....Walking in to the funeral home to see Mr. Hackler waiting for us to say a prayer for the family. This man is an absolute ANGEL on Earth!!!!!"

## **Officer Saves the Day**

Deputy Sheriff Chris Owen of the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office is being praised for helping an unnamed woman in her time of need.

Yahoo Lifestyle reported that Owen was on duty in Walkertown, North Carolina, on September 23 when a woman in a black vehicle asked him for help at a local Sheetz gas station. She explained she was handicapped and asked if Owen could pump her gas for her.

Deputy Owen happily agreed, and the woman asked Owen to put just \$8 in her car as that was all the money she had. When Owen learned where the woman was headed, he was concerned \$8 was not going to be enough gas. Instead, he decided to fill up her tank and pay the bill himself.

"I did not want her to run out of gas and be stranded, so I decided to just swipe my credit card to pay for her gas," he explained.

The woman was reportedly grateful and profusely thanked Deputy Owen before driving off.

The story and a photo of Deputy Owen pumping the woman's gas was snapped and placed in the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office.

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