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## Looking for Answers about Suicide and Veterans

Matt Bauer

Wright State University - Main Campus, bauer.83@wright.edu

Will Davis

Wright State University - Main Campus, william.davis@wright.edu

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# ***Looking For Answers About Suicide And Veterans***

*by Matt Bauer*

*The suicide rate among veterans has nearly doubled since 2005, and this has prompted the military to conduct a series of decade-long studies to find out why. But more information is needed since early findings have produced contradictory results. Answers will not come easy. Today our Veterans Voice series continues with Air Force veteran, and Wright State University student Matt Bauer of Vandalia, and Air Force veteran George Denillo, who remember their friend, and fellow officer, Sean.*

*Transcript:*

**Matt Bauer (MB):** Describe the brotherhood that is the military, especially in the cop career field in the Air Force.

**George Denillo (GD):** You hear about the brotherhood of veterans, or the military, or the police, or what not, but for us it's kind of a two fold thing because we not only have the military connection but also the police connection. You and I both serve as military police officers over at Wright Patterson Air Force Base so we all kind of stick together, and have an even more special bond with one another.

**MB:** Describe Sean.

**GD:** He was kind of the class clown. He'd always go out of his way to try and make people laugh. I think in his own way he recognized that our world is a little serious.

**MB:** Yes, he definitely was like that. You know when you work a static post and you're sitting there on the gate and you can't move, and you find out Sergeant Malec is working the mobile patrol around my area. You think, please God let him stop by, and when he does, what's he going to do?

**GD:** You never knew what was going to come out of his mouth.

**MB:** So in April he committed suicide.

**GD:** I originally find out through Facebook. Like a lot of people, I was in shock. I was like no there's no way that this guy, of all people, would commit suicide.

**MB:** Why do you say this guy of all people?

**GD:** Because he always made people laugh, and then out of the blue he's gone from the world by his own hand.

**MB:** You think Sean's suicide had a lot to do with his military career...

**GD:** Absolutely.

**MB:** ... and what he went through. Because he spent more than two years overseas in Iraq, of all places, during the time when Iraq was popping.

**GD:** You know, when you're in the moment, your training just kicks in. It's not until after the smoke clears and battle's done that you actually have time to process and think about what you just did, or just went through.

**MB:** I know Sean and he never talked about any of this.

**GD:** No, I never heard him talk about his service overseas whatsoever.

**MB:** I spent countless days and weeks in the same car with this man and you could never get it out of him. After I got back from my first deployment and most traumatic deployment, I'd tell him bit and pieces of what I'd been through and his response was, "That's cool," cut off, done, next topic. I think everyone is wired differently, you know. I was willing to share with Sean stuff that I was going through, but Sean didn't want to the help, or he didn't know how to get it, or whatever.

**GD:** I used to be a lot harder on people who committed suicide than I am now. Now that I've actually gone through my own difficult stuff and, I don't necessarily agree with it because you put a lot of people through a lot of pain, but I get it, man. It's hard to deal with some stuff, and not everyone is well equipped with the bag of tools to deal with these things.

**MB:** I think his medicine of choice was humor. How are you going to remember him?

**GD:** For the good times that he gave people. I'm going to remember him for that.

**MB:** I first thing I always think of is his stupid mustache. Because you say Sean Michael Malec to me, and I picture his face with that half-smirk and that one face he always made whenever he entered a room. He had arrogance about him when he walked in, like, hey everybody, Sean's here.

**GD:** Yep.

*Veterans Voices is produced in collaboration with the [Veteran and Military Center at Wright State University](#). Funding for this series comes from Ohio Humanities.*

Photo:

caption: Air Force veterans Matt Bauer (left) and George Denillo

credit: Will Davis