



Marcero's Hothouse to hit the road

Exponent

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Can we talk?

'Hamfest' possibly coming to Brooklyn



Editor's note: Contract negotiations are currently underway to bring a large ham radio swap meet (hamfest) to Michigan International Speedway this October. In this story, writer William Lauterbach explores the world of amateur radio and its continued relevance in our dot.com world.

By William Lauterbach
For the Exponent

Gone are the days of hefty vacuum tube radios. Absent are the basements and garages turned into neighborhood "ham radio shacks" where kids hung out after school to watch and listen to the ham operator talk around the world. Retired are the requirements for amateur radio operators to know Morse code in order to become a licensed amateur (ham) radio operator. This is no longer your father's ham radio era.

Many thought that computers and the Internet signaled the demise of ham radio. However, today's ham radio operators often use computers in conjunction with newly developed "Software Defined Radios," or SDR's. These are actually small radios that connect to a computer while the computer does all of the dial tuning, power adjustments and other radio related functions.

Furthermore, a majority of hams employ one or more computers in their "shack" (yes they are still called shacks), to either aid them in locating the address of a particular ham radio operator or for use in transmitting the new digital modes of amateur radio communications.

One element that has not changed and has actually taken a leap forward is the "hamfest" – a type of amateur radio swap meet. A hamfest is where the bulk of buying and selling of amateur radio equipment takes place. Decades ago, hams would almost exclusively meet at hamfests to purchase new and used

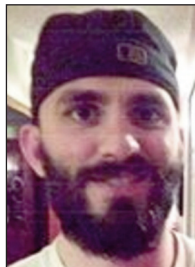


Rick Roderick

See *Hamfest* page 3

One year later

It has been a year since former Marine Geoffrey Bowen was reported missing and the tragedy of war came home to Brooklyn. What has happened since has not been easy for his widow, Lauren Bowen, but as this story shows, there are rays of hope.



Geoffrey Bowen



Troy Clogg



Lauren and Tanner Bowen had something to smile about Saturday morning.

By Matt Schepeler

On March 31, 2016 Geoffrey Bowen, a former United States Marine who had served two tours of duty in Iraq, was listed as missing by his family. The Brooklyn resident, who had a wife and two young children, was thought to be suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. He had left a suicide note. Police stressed that they were concerned for his safety and people should be careful when approaching him.

In the coming weeks, the search made regional and national headlines as it fanned out from Jackson County to the surrounding communities and states. A \$10,000 award was offered for information leading to Bowen's safe return. The story was featured in the *Marine Corps Times*, and was often repeated on major news outlets.

It did not have a happy ending. On April 20, 2016, Bowen's body was found inside his 1989 Ford Bronco in a heavily wooded area of Northfield Township. And while it may have seemed like the end of a sad story for casual observers, it was only the beginning of sorrows for Bowen's widow, Lauren, who suddenly found herself on her own with the couple's two children: Augie, 2, and 9-month-old daughter Tanner.

The Bowens had come to Brooklyn from their native Saline because Geoff loved hunting, fishing and the outdoors. "He knew once he saw the buck pole at Knutson's that this was his kind of town," said Lauren with a smile in a conversation last Saturday. "He loved the outdoors, and thought this was a perfect place to live. He said that when

we crossed M-52 [into the Irish Hills] it was like being on vacation."

They found a house they loved on Wamplers Lake Road and seemed to be on their way to putting the war years behind them, but adjusting to civilian life was difficult for Bowen. Whatever had happened to him during the war was hard to shake.

Bowen had joined the Marines as a rifleman in December of 2005 and deployed to Iraq in 2007 and 2008 with the 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines. "He was tight-lipped about his service," said Lauren, adding that she thought he

toddler and Tanner wasn't even walking yet. To add to the stress, the house is located on a 1½ acre lot with thick, lush grass, and there was a never-ending list of yard work to be kept up.

"I would wait until the kids were both asleep and go outside and push mow," she said, adding that she never could get the yard under control. To make matters worse, Geoff had gathered wood they used to heat the house, and there was "a ton" of it in the yard.

"Thankfully, Knutson's bought that, so that really helped," she said.

As the months have turned into a year, Lauren has learned to adjust. She is now ready to make some big decisions, and the first one is to sell the house. She has put it on the market, but the yard had become a liability. Much of it was overgrown. Any semblance of landscaping had been overtaken by weeds and grass. A beautiful fire pit in the back yard had virtually disappeared under thick thatch, and tree limbs and sticks had accumulated throughout.

Then, out of the blue, she got a phone call.

"Someone called and said that they wanted to come out and do some yard work. I thought they were just going to mow the grass," said Bowen.

It turned out to be a little more than just mowing the grass. On Saturday, April 22, one year and two days after Geoffrey Bowen's body was found, 25 volunteers showed up on Bowen's doorstep. They came in dump trucks

"Life is all about what you give, not what you get."

Troy Clogg

served as part of a sniper squad in Falluja on both tours.

After leaving the Marines, Bowen had gotten a job as a janitor, but the PTSD continuously interfered with his life, and he was told to quit the job.

It was then, as he struggled with his past and worried about his future, that he disappeared.

Life after her husband's death has been a tough, said Bowen. She still has family living in Saline, but they encouraged her to take a year before making any big decisions. She opted to stay put in the Brooklyn home and take care of the children, but there was so much to do. Augie was an active

See *One year later* page 2



A worker removes a stump from Lauren Bowen's yard. Below, Matt Scott moves rocks.



Beth Savastano prepares to feed volunteers.



Jesus Nava scoops rocks into a wheelbarrow in an effort to help Lauren Bowen.



One year later

Continued from page 1

carrying rocks for the driveway and mulch and shrubs for landscaping, towing trailers holding mowers, chain saws, shovels, leaf blowers and wheelbarrows.

And they came to work. Hard.

"This is just something we do," said Troy Clogg, owner of Troy Clogg Landscape Associates out of Wixom, which is located east of Farmington Hills. "We seek out military families that may need some help."

Clogg started his company with "a shovel and a \$200 truck," and has done well for himself. A key

component of his business, he said, is giving back.

"Life is all about what you give, not what you get."

All 25 of the workers volunteer their time, and in this case got out of bed around 5 a.m. to spend their Saturday mowing, cutting, trimming and mulching in Bowen's yard.

"It feels good," said Jesus Nava, who was shoveling rocks from the back of a dump truck into a wheelbarrow for Matt Scott, himself a former Marine, to haul to a waiting shrub bed.

Clogg said that he heard of Bowen's plight from another veteran they had recently helped, and he remembered the story from when Geoffrey had disappeared a year ago.

"We knew we had to do something," he said. "We like to say, 'If not us, then who?'"

While the progress being made in the yard was impressive, the best work was evident streaming down Lauren Bowen's face, though she did her best to keep her cheeks wiped dry.

"I haven't been able to stop crying since they got here," she said. "It is just so amazing. It just blows my mind."

She paused and looked around at the small army of volunteers hauling, raking, cutting and mowing.

"My husband would have been so happy to see the yard being taken care of this way." She smiled, and as the tears continued to flow, she gave up trying to hide them.

"This is such a huge blessing."

Posttraumatic stress disorder can develop after a person is exposed to a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, warfare, traffic collisions, or other threats on a person's life. Symptoms may include disturbing thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to the events; mental or physical distress to trauma-related cues; alterations in how a person thinks and feels, and an increase in the fight-or-flight response. People with PTSD are at a higher risk of suicide.

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