

Chicago Tribune



Hudson tragedy

For Jennifer Hudson (left), her family was the rock that kept her grounded. Friday, though, she lost her mother, Darnell Donerson, (right) and brother. **Chicagoland**



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TRIBUNE INVESTIGATION

FALSE COURAGE

Claims for top military honors don't hold up

By John Crewdson
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — Scores of Americans, from clergymen to lawyers to CEOs, are claiming medals of valor they never earned.

A Tribune investigation has found that the fabrication of heroic war records is far more extensive than you might think.

Take the online edition of Who's Who, long the nation's premier biographical reference. Of the 333 people whose profiles state they earned one of the nation's most esteemed military medals, fully a third of those claims cannot be supported by military records.

Even in death, these stories live on. A look at 273 obituaries published in the past decade alone found that in more than four of five cases, official records didn't support decorations for bravery attributed to the deceased.

The Tribune also found bogus decorations, including at least two Medals of Honor, engraved on headstones in military cemeteries across the country.

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58%

of medals unverified

The Tribune's analysis of 700 medals from Who's Who and obituaries found 403 were not supported by military records. They include 15 Medals of Honor, right, the nation's paramount military decoration for bravery.

INSIDE ON PAGE 10

- Our findings broken down
- Valor for sale
- The top three excuses used



BILL HOGAN/TRIBUNE
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION



ROBYN BECK/GETTY-AFP

For McCain to win it, 2 states hold key

John McCain needs to engineer a comeback in two places that were once considered Republican safe ground. Colorado and Virginia, which President George W. Bush won in 2004, are leaning toward Barack Obama. **PAGE 13**

Michelle Obama mines once-hostile territory

Reaching out to traditionally Republican military families. **PAGE 20**

A first 100 days plan? Tell it to the economy

Wall Street bailout has changed the challenge for the winner. **PAGE 14**

HOLIDAY GIVING

A young man finds his way



How the YES! Fathers Project changed a life. **CHICAGOLAND**

WEATHER

| | | |
|--------|------|--------|
| | | |
| 7 A.M. | NOON | 6 P.M. |
| 44 | 57 | 50 |

See Tom's forecast in Chicagoland. **SECTION 2, PAGE 10**

Home is where the dads are

Men making switch as wives earn more, parenting roles change

By Barbara Rose
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

As the date when Evelyn Diaz was due back from maternity leave at a Chicago non-profit loomed, she and her husband, Josh Walsman, discussed their child-care options. Several conversations later, the first-time parents concluded that he was the logical choice to stay home with their newborn.

"My wife made more money, she had better benefits, better career prospects," recalled Walsman, who worked as an aide to a Chicago alderman. "It just seemed really clear, like wow, OK, I'll quit my job."

Now, seven years later, the 37-year-old dad still cares for Isabel—a confident 2nd grader—cooking, cleaning and rehabbing their family's West Side brick bungalow while Diaz commutes downtown to work.

This is a calculation more men are making. Thirty-seven percent of working fathers say they would leave their jobs to look after their kids if they felt they could swing it financially, according to an annual

poll by CareerBuilder. The number of stay-at-home dads has more than doubled since 1999, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Women's pay progress is a big driver in the change. Nearly 26 percent of wives outearn their husbands, up from 18 percent two decades ago, according to U.S. government data.

And with unemployment ticking up amid a slowing economy, more men are likely to consider putting careers on hold to stay home.

That was Mark Huntzinger's choice after his job as general man-

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Stay-at-home dad Josh Walsman combs his daughter Isabel's hair. He has held down the fort since she was born seven years ago. **MICHAEL TERCHA/TRIBUNE**



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FROM PAGE ONE

Home is where the dads are

Continued from Page 1

ager of a \$65 million corporate division was eliminated last year. He and his wife, Jennifer Campe, had relied on day care four days a week for their twins, James and Lily, now 4½. Their arrangement worked most of the time.

"It was when one of us was traveling and the kids got sick that the stresses really ratcheted up," he recalled.

Now the 49-year-old enjoys a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hang out with his children at home while his wife focuses on a demanding new vice president's job.

His favorite moments? Removing the training wheels from his son's bicycle and pushing him down their driveway, and watching his daughter pirouette in ballet class. Cooking is not his forte, but the kids "aren't withering away," he said.



Mark Huntzinger, who has been at home for a year, makes lunch with daughter Lily, 4½. CHUCK BERMAN/TRIBUNE

Oak Park resident Thomas Walsh segued into a stay-at-home role after his job with Bear Stearns at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange was eliminated in late 2005. His hours at the Merc had allowed him to be home for

their two school-age children while his wife, Gina Kolk, a physical therapist with a busy practice, worked late. So when they learned Kolk was pregnant with their third, it was an easy choice for him to stay home with the baby too.

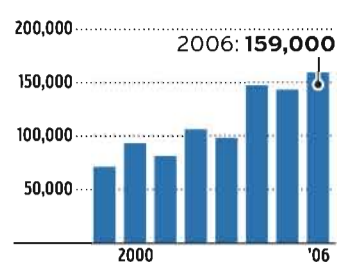
"Being home with Duke has been a blessing," Walsh said. "It's been me and him, going to the park, riding my bike."

When the couple decided that Duke should be with other children, they placed

the 22-month-old in day care and Walsh took a part-time job at a delicatessen.

"It's good for me mentally," he said. "It doesn't come close to what I used to make, but I feel I need to go back and do something" to contribute fi-

Stay-at-home dads THEIR NUMBERS



Average age: 37
Average number of children: 2

WHY THEY DO IT

- Want to play bigger role in parenting
- Job transitions
- Finances (wife earns more)

WIVES EARNING MORE



SOURCES: Aaron Rochlen, University of Texas, U.S. Census Bureau

tribune

nancially. One factor that determines whether a father is happy staying home is whether he views being a provider in broader terms than breadwinner, said psychologist Aaron Rochlen, an associate professor at University of Texas at Austin and an authority on stay-at-home dads.

"Men who are doing well define fathering as central to their sense of masculinity," Rochlen said. "These guys still think of themselves as providers, but it's shifted from financial provider to, 'What do I need to provide for my family?'"

Jeff Richardson, whose job as a sales and marketing vice president was eliminated in a merger nearly five years ago, can no longer imagine returning to his former role.

"I was ready to be a dad, ready to be a stay-at-home dad," said Richardson, 38, whose wife, Christy Richardson, is private-equity director for a large family foundation.

The couple live in Los Altos, Calif. with daughter Kaitlyn, 4, and Parker, 2 months.

He felt fortunate to have been "adopted" by a mom's group that met every Monday after Kaitlyn was born. Being the only dad didn't matter. "It helped ease that transition," he recalled.

One of his biggest challenges is remembering when to step aside for mom. "I'd do a bath a certain way, she'd do it a different way. I need to make sure I don't jump in and say, 'That's really not the way we do it around here.'"

Rob Mulholland quit his job as a bond salesman at a securities firm when daughter Olivia was 9 months old.

"I felt one of us needed to be here for her and I thought I could take a risk," the North Side resident recalled. "I found I wasn't bad at it."

Eight years later, he and his wife, Mary Pat, a financial executive, have three children and he's still at home. Adopting Luke, who is 18 months old, delayed his re-entry into the business world.

Still, some stay-at-home dads miss outside employment.

Huntzinger continues his job search two days a week. "There's always that tug. It's not financial, just kind of a personal tug to get back to work because that's what I've done for 25 years," he said.

Walsman isn't ready to compromise his family's good life. Staying home allows him to volunteer at Isabel's school, help her with piano practice and homework—not to mention serving his wife and daughter home-cooked dinners. Rigatoni with ham and peas in a vodka cream sauce was on the menu on a recent Friday.

"If both of us were working, the only time we were going to be together as a family is after 6 o'clock, tired and run down," he said.

"In terms of self-identity," he added, "I resolved it this year by doing a gut rehab, more than enough to justify my spot on this space of the Earth."

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