



## **BLET Auxiliary News**

# **When tragedy strikes, what can you do?**

**By Kathie Bailey**  
**National 1st Vice President and**  
**National Legislative Representative**  
**BLET Auxiliary**

**(Editor's Note: Kathie is the widow of G.Y. Bailey, who was killed in a head-on collision in dark territory in Shepherd, Texas, on Sept. 15, 2005.)**

It's the middle of the night - you're sound asleep. Your husband is at work, just like every other normal day. The doorbell rings several times. Startled, you roll over, look at the clock - it's 3:21a.m. You get out of bed and start down the hallway to answer the door.

Quickly you check the children's rooms on your way, just to make sure they're in bed asleep and safe. They are and you breathe a quick sigh of relief. Then you realize, you have a grown child that doesn't live at home.

Your heart skips a beat as you ask who's at the door. They answer you, but it's mumbled, and you can't understand. Did they say "sheriff"? You ask again, and you still can't understand clearly. Your heart skips another beat. You take a deep breath, and crack the door.

It's not a sheriff. It's your husband's friend from work, his union buddy. You're groggy and confused, thinking, "What is he doing here at this hour?"

He stands in the doorway just looking at you while you keep asking him, "What's going on, why are you here?" while he just stands there, not saying anything. He finally tells you, "You need to listen to me. There was an accident, two trains in a head-on collision."

All of a sudden you get this surge of adrenaline. Your heart begins to pound like it's going to pop out of your chest. Your hands begin to shake and you feel like you are either going to pass out or be sick. You tell him, "You're scaring me. Where is my husband? How bad is he hurt?"

His friend and union brother just keeps shaking his head and telling you that you need to listen to him, as he sits you down, kneels in front of you and holds your hands while hanging his head. The next words that come out of his mouth are words that you never want to hear. "G.Y. didn't make it."

Your whole world spins out of control and crashes down around you in a million pieces at that very second.

I know they were the hardest words this man has ever had to say to a friend and union brother's

wife, and I pray that I never have to hear those words again.

If you're like me, you think that happens to "someone else." Now, you become that "someone else." Emotions run raw in a tragic situation; all hell breaks loose in your life and you have to deal with things you never dreamed you'd ever be dealing with.

Too many spouses are not involved enough in the railroad worker's work and union that he belongs to. If you are one of those spouses, you won't have the slightest idea as to what you should and shouldn't do at a time when panic sets in and your brain and body go into "auto pilot" to get through what is happening, and your spouse isn't there to help you through this mess that is now called your life.

Two and a half years before my husband was killed, one of his best friends dropped dead of a massive heart attack in the parking lot at the yard office about 10 minutes after getting off of a train and tying up. It was February of 2003 and his friend was only 56 years old, happy, healthy and had never had any type of heart or health problems. His friend left behind a 37 year old widow - that he was getting ready to celebrate his 3rd wedding anniversary with - and two grown children in their early to mid twenties.

It was a real wake up call for us. We have four children between us - two of them grown, two in their early teens and one precious grandson. My husband and I both then decided to make out our wills and get our affairs in order "just in case."

Now, you are probably thinking, "I'm too young to have a will or have life insurance." Well, we thought that too, but we did it anyway, and thank God we did. If you and your spouse are lucky, you won't have to use wills, life insurance, etc. until you are very old. But in our case, the "just in case" came much sooner than any of us ever imagined.

At the time my husband was killed, he was the Local Chairman of BLET Division 62, a primary member on the BLET National Safety Task Force, the Safety Captain of the Houston Service Unit Safety Committee and in 2003, he was nominated by Union Pacific as a finalist for the John C. Kenefick Safety Award. He ate, lived, slept and breathed for his family, the BLET and the railroad.

When his friend died suddenly in 2003, he and I sat down - with the help of our close friend and BLET Designated Legal Counsel Bob Tramuto, with the firm Jones and Granger - and gathered information that a railroad workers spouse would need to know if they were ever involved in an accident, whether injured or worse yet, killed.

I can honestly say that if it weren't for me being interested enough in my husband's work and his BLET union, I wouldn't have made it through the last 14 months. His BLET union brothers and sisters were there for me and our family, hundreds of them. They had my back when I needed them the most and for that alone, I will be eternally grateful to our union family. My husband would be so very proud of them for stepping up and taking care of our family. I feel it is imperative to share with you some things the railroad worker's spouse should know, "just in case" something happens to you.

God knows I hope none of you will ever need it, but if you do become that "someone else," here is a list of "dos and don'ts" that I have put together should the unthinkable happen to your loved one. I hope some of these things will help your family, just as it helped ours.

Just for the record, my husband's accident happened around midnight and the railroad never called me. A claims agent showed up at 4:38 a.m. and was asked to leave our property

immediately. The claims agent was informed that we wanted no contact with the railroad unless it was through our legal counsel, Bob Tramuto with Jones and Granger.

As I have said before, you just never know. I hope none of your families will ever have to go through such chaos and devastation, but if they do, having as much information available at all times will help them know what to do and not do. Please feel free to contact me at any time. I can be contacted via email at [kdbailey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kdbailey@sbcglobal.net), mailed at 10051 Barr Lake Dr., Houston, TX 77095 or by cell phone at (713) 298-9255.

Stay safe out there on the rails!

---

## **Things your spouse should always have on hand in the event of an injury or death**

1. Names and phone numbers to your local division's union officers: Local Chairman, President, Secretary/Treasurer, Vice President, Chaplain.
  2. Names and phone numbers of the BLET Designated Legal Counsel members in your area.
  3. All insurance policies: Health, Disability, Job Insurance, Life Insurance
  4. Your current will. Whether we want to believe it or not, everyone needs to have one.
  5. Any other important paperwork, such as a living will, DNR, power of attorney or organ donor information.
  6. Names and phone numbers of the BLET National Auxiliary Officers at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net)
- 

## **Things to do when a railroad official or claims agent contacts you to inform you of an injury to or death of your spouse**

1. Make the railroad official contacting you in person identify themselves; make certain they are who they say they are.
2. Find out exactly where your spouse is located and what his/her condition is.
3. **Do not** allow any railroad representatives into your home.
4. Get the pertinent information and **do not** volunteer any information. Make **no statements** - verbal, written or recorded.
5. If in public, get the needed information and walk away. Again make **no statements**.
6. If a railroad official calls you on the phone, get the needed information and hang up. Again, make **no statements**. From this time forward, monitor all calls if you have Caller ID and an answering machine.
7. **Do not** sign anything.
8. **Do not** accept anything from them.
9. After initial contact, and after you have the needed information, have no further contact with any railroad official or claims agent until after you have contacted a BLET Designated Legal

Counsel. Make certain that the railroad official is informed that they are not to contact you or any member of your family from this time forward until you want to make contact with them.

10. At the hospital, **do not** allow any railroad official or claims agent into the hospital room or treatment area.

11. Instruct any railroad official or claims agent that they are to have **no contact** with the patient, family or any medical personnel treating your spouse. Inform them that BLET Designated Legal Counsel has been notified. This will back them off very quickly.

12. **Do not** allow any railroad official or claims agent to make any decisions concerning medical treatment or arrangements for your spouse.

13. Sign **only** necessary medical forms for the treatment of your spouse that are from the hospital. **Do not** make statements to any medical personnel except in regard to the medical treatment for your spouse.

14. Make certain that all medical personnel, including doctors, know of these instructions and abide by them. Insist that the Doctor/Patient confidentiality be observed.

15. When and where you can, especially if your spouse has been medicated, make certain that your spouse gives a consistent history of the accident to each medical provider that may inquire. Consistency of the event is very important, as these medical providers will be questioned by the railroad officials.

**Remember...** Anything you say to a railroad official and/or claims agent will be used against you and your spouse in order to protect the railroad's interest. Call a BLET Designated Legal Counsel as soon as possible and be governed by their advice and instructions.

---