

## Military OneSource Podcast — Digital Remains

**Program title:** Casualty Affairs

### Episode transcript

#### Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast.

Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit [MilitaryOneSource.mil](http://MilitaryOneSource.mil).

#### Bruce Moody:

Hi, everybody. We're going to be talking about preparing for the passing on of loved ones. And when we're having that conversation with our families, it's not unusual to have a conversation about, say, preparing a will, something we normally do, but we're going to take a different approach.

Something that's probably just as important to discuss and well, the term is "digital remains". What do you do with somebody's Facebook page? We're going to have that conversation today.

I'm Bruce Moody, and I'm joined today by Lisa Valentine, who is a program manager with Casualty, Mortuary Affairs and Military Funeral Honors. Hello, Lisa.

#### Lisa Valentine:

Hi, Bruce. Thank you very much for inviting me here today.

#### Bruce:

Thank you for just introducing this fascinating aspect of life. Life now is as digital as it is real and there's a lot to think about. I think what we're going to do as we talk about this, we're going to split it into two categories because when you're looking at your own ...

*Inaudible announcement over a loudspeaker in the conference hall.*

#### Bruce:

Ah, see, we knew the announcements would come. That's OK. We are actually at ... This is a good time to mention this. You want to talk about where we are today?

**Lisa:**

So, today, we are at the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association's annual conference here live in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Bruce:**

That's right. The Defense Department comes to these meetings because it's just so important to keep up with what is happening in the funeral industry. People find innovative ways, creative ways, beautiful ways and also, current ways, to deal with somebody passing on. And, so, it's an important discussion to add to that. Just as normally you would talk about a will, we need to talk about digital remains.

Again, there are basically two categories. There's the opportunity to memorialize someone who has passed on, but there's also protecting from harm, protecting what those online platforms might be if they got into the wrong hands. We'll just cover both of those topics. Why don't you get us going in this conversation and tell us what digital remains are.

**Lisa:**

Absolutely, Bruce. Digital remains, it's our internet activity. It's our social media. It's ... maybe we have a website that we have up. Basically, it's our digital footprint. And the reason why it's called digital remains because it remains behind. It's what we leave behind and it's there forever.

And so, how do we protect that? How do we ensure that our Facebook account or Twitter, that someone doesn't hack into it and speak to our audience, our family, our friends from the dead, creating harm or trying to manipulate others in order to steal from them or just whatever, to play on someone else's feelings or just a myriad of things.

**Bruce:**

Right. And so, we'll get into some of the things that you should do, like preserving usernames and passwords. But you brought up a really interesting point just before we started to record and that's, as we know, with every passing year our digital life and our real life just continue to merge. A person is as real on their social media page in many respects as they are in reality. Imagine a grieving individual is looking at the Facebook page of their loved one and then suddenly that page just goes away. It's gone. Facebook has deleted that page.

Let's talk about that. Let's talk about the impact of that emotionally. Lisa, you should know this, she is holding her phone and she's got the terms of service that Facebook has. Facebook actually has a whole section that addresses this issue. Why don't you get into that, Lisa, if you would?

**Lisa:**

Absolutely. You may have, for example, someone that you love very much. If somebody knows from Facebook, for example, that you're deceased, your Facebook page gets shut down.

But if it's memorialized and that's where you want to designate somebody, you can do this ahead of time. You can do it today. You just go into your Facebook account and you designate who, or you give someone your password. If you fail to do that, Facebook is not going to give you the password and, basically, it's shut down.

But there may be a picture that means so much, and you don't have a picture of that. You never download it, but it is on your loved one or your friend's Facebook page and that picture gives you solace. But now it's gone and it's gone forever. Now, it's another loss.

So having that memorialized and having your footprint forever protected, there are some things that you need to do. If you have a Twitter account, you may want to check out to see how does Twitter handle those things, or other social media, or a website. How do you protect that? Do you want it to close down and be forgotten, or do you want it to live on, but yet, at the same time, be protected so that someone doesn't take over your identity and harm those you love.

**Bruce:**

The bottom line is, there are steps you can take that put all of these decisions in your hands. And if you don't make that decision, that decision will be made for you. The result could be painful. We really want to make that point that people take the step. We don't need to get into the technical aspects of it, but it's not a long process. It's not a lot. It's not difficult to do.

**Lisa:**

No, absolutely not. There are so many resources I think out there to figure out how to do it, whether you do an engine search and so forth to figure it out. There's a myriad of different social mind, or internet activity that you participate in that it's hard to be able to say, "Oh, well," and we talk about certain ones because we know that as we sit here talking to each other, Bruce, technology changes and things increase and so forth. But the big thing is you just want to be able to prevent hackers from destroying your digital footprint.

**Bruce:**

I've just decided that we're going to do something. What we're going to do back in the office, is we're going to create a fact sheet and we're going to send it to the Military OneSource call center.

What we're suggesting is that people can go to the Military OneSource call center and believe me, by the time you're listening to this episode, this will have been done. What I'm trying to say is that you can contact Military OneSource and we'll put the URL and the phone number in the program notes of this episode. You can call the Military OneSource call center 24/7, anytime. You can ask them about digital remains. You can ask them about how to make changes to a social media account to make sure it doesn't go away or make sure it does what you want it to do versus something automatic.

**Lisa:**

Absolutely. And I think this is just as important as you would want to take care of the physical remains of your loved one who's passed. Your digital remains are just as important as your physical remains.

**Bruce:**

Absolutely. Lisa, this is a really fascinating discussion. I really appreciate this information.

**Lisa:**

Thank you very much, Bruce. And also thank you to our listeners.

**Bruce:**

All right. Thanks. Yeah. This is Military OneSource. We are a Defense Department resource with a ton of articles and information for families to navigate military life. We want you to subscribe to this podcast post because we do touch on so many different aspects of military life, including what to do with a Facebook page before someone passes away.

We appreciate you listening today. Keep in touch. I'm Bruce Moody. Have a great day. Bye-bye.