

Survivor Story: Carl David's "Bader Field"

Death challenges the strength of any family. A suicide can tear a family apart. Art dealer Carl David, fourth in a line of a four-generation family owned art gallery, recounts the death of his father Sam and the suicide of his brother Bruce in [*Bader Field*](#), a touching memoir of life and art. Art plays a major part in the story of the David family, but the love and strength of that family shows how living life itself can be an art. Carl David writes of his family's lows and highs as his way of "paying it forward" and helping others strive and thrive through the adversity of suicide.

Many of the highs in the David family came in the form of the love of small engine piloting that Sam David shared with his sons. Until its closing in 2006, [*Bader Field*](#) stood as one of the oldest airfields in the United States. Sam flew his Aztec out of Bader Field for years. When Carl returned to the ghostly remnant of that field, it was as if the spirit of his father hovered above it, still circling joyfully.

Carl begins his memoir with the death of his father by heart attack. "As I stood in the kitchen that day," Carl remembers, "I felt my soul agonizing for any children I might have because they would never know their grandfather, except through me and the lessons I would transfer to them. I made a commitment then and there to etch into their young minds every single shred of goodness and wisdom I could furnish, and paint them an everlasting mental portrait of the man." *Bader Field* gives us all an "everlasting" portrait of Sam while simultaneously giving us a portrait of the author himself, a man as good and wise as his father in his desire to keep his family together and honor the memory of his father by continuing his business.

The trauma of his father's death came years after the even more shocking death of his brother Bruce. When Bruce took his own life in the family's gallery, the silence surrounding that topic was deafening. "Bruce's battle was over," Carl realizes, "but ours had just begun." The rawness of this psychic wound drove Carl to begin the process of writing *Bader Field* in hopes of helping some family avoid the same struggles his family faced.

Bader Field talks of airplanes and fallen loved ones, but it also talks of the world of art and how engaging with that world can enhance your life. You never feel that the David family ever sees art as purely a commodity to be bought and sold. The Old Masters mean more than dollar signs to them. They internalize the sensitivity and emotion of the great works and graft those qualities onto their lives. "If his eye contact didn't attract you," Carl writes of his father, "then it would be the tenor of his voice, the music of his speech, or his positive energy. One would be losing something incredible if they missed an opportunity to be around him. Every day was an experience which could only be countered by the next." One would also be losing something incredible if they missed the opportunity to read *Bader Field*. If art teaches us anything, it is that every day is an experience that can only be topped by tomorrow, yet we must live each day as if tomorrow will never come. *Bader Field* reminds us of the truths of art while teaching us how to live them.

[Many thanks to Carl David for providing me with the image above and a review copy of *[Bader Field](#)*.]

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