

**A**nother Veteran's Day passes that I can't call my dad. Two years ago my dad passed away from brain cancer. It took him quickly — six weeks from diagnosis to death.

He always expected me to call him on Veteran's Day. I loved talking to my dad but I never really understood why I needed to call him on Veteran's Day. My dad served in both the Air Force and the Air National Guard, retiring after 20 years of service, but he never was shot at or took part in any conflicts overseas. Isn't that what made someone a "veteran"?

But last winter I had my eyes opened as to why he deserved that call every Veteran's Day.

My sister and mom asked me to be at Mom's house at a certain time over the weekend. We usually keep a pretty loose schedule in the family, but this time they stressed to me that I had to be at the house no later than 2 p.m.

So, with my wife and then 3-year-old in tow, I made the three-hour drive from Lawrence, Kan., to Wichita, Kan.

I was sure we were there on time. But surprisingly, no one was home. So we let ourselves in and got comfortable.

About ten minutes later the doorbell rang. It was one of my dad's old employees, a gentleman by the name of Korey. I hadn't seen Korey since Dad's funeral, but I knew Korey well. He and my dad were close, and I also got to know Korey and his family pretty well over the years. Korey even helped get me a job in a bookstore back when I was in college.

At the time it didn't occur to me that the reason I needed to be home at 2 p.m. was because Korey wanted to meet with me.

Korey said he wanted to talk to me about my dad, so we sat down. Korey started getting emotional as he started to explain the influence my dad had on his military career. Korey stressed that it was my dad who mentored him throughout his career, and if it weren't for my dad, he probably wouldn't have continued his service to the country, which included two tours in Afghanistan.

And then Korey pulled out a medal he was

## A Medal for Boyd

BY SETH JONES



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awarded. It was called the "Hometown Heroes" medal and it was presented to him for his service in protecting our freedoms after the 9/11 attacks. The inscription reads a quote from George W. Bush, given on Oct. 7th, 2001: "We will not waver, we will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail."

Korey explained to me that this particular medal is meant to be given away to your mentor.

We were all teary-eyed as Korey told me that this medal was meant for "B.J." as he called him, my father, Boyd. But since Dad had passed, he wanted me to have it, and to know how important my dad was to his, and many other military careers.

It was perhaps my highlight of 2010. How often, after all, is a wimpy journalist presented a military medal in honor of his dad?

I wish I could have called my dad on this Veteran's Day and told him that I get it — I get why every single person who dons a military uniform for this nation is special. But fate and that horrible thing called cancer won't allow it.

But another once-in-a-lifetime opportunity arose recently, and I capitalized on the moment to honor my dad in the best way I know how. When my wife and I welcomed the birth of our second child last month — he was born on Oct. 5th and weighed 8 pounds, 4 ounces and was 21 inches long — we proudly named him after the greatest man I ever knew. And someday I'll be able to give my son Boyd that medal, tell him about Korey, and tell him all about his proud namesake.

I'll get back to turf next month, I promise. But I did want to take this moment to tell this story, and also to thank all the *Golfdom* readers who have proudly served our great nation.

I can't call Dad anymore, but I'll tell you what I would've told him: Thank you.

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