



“There it was, this watch, just ticking away and with every second that goes by I miss my hero that much more.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

A Dymond in the rough

As I’m writing this article, I’m sitting in the Marley House Hospice Center in Prescott, Ariz., where I’ve been for the last four days. You see, my hero was admitted after getting in a car accident the other day. Now to be clear, although it beat him up pretty badly, it wasn’t just the car accident that put him in this place. However it certainly was a contributing factor and it definitely accelerated his declining health issues.

For the past two years he has been experiencing numerous changes in his overall health. Although he had a lot of little things going on, none of them individually was life threatening. But once the accident happened, things began to change very rapidly and his body just wasn’t strong enough to win the battle.

My hero passed away a few days later. I personally have never been through a hospice experience, but I can honestly say it changed my life. The people that work in those places are true angels.

The funny thing about this situation was here was my hero lying there in bed during his last days and hours and yet he was still continuing to teach me the lessons of life and the reality of death, just by going through the process.

My hero was a strong worker his entire life and even though he was frail at the end, he had a huge heart that just kept right on beating strongly, even though the rest of his body was struggling.

My hero also worked at a golf course until he was 80 years old. When the club began to have financial problems, his job of outside services and marshalling was eliminated. This too took a toll on him because he just loved going to the golf course and being with people. My mom used to joke that the only reason he wanted to work on Wednesday was so he could hug the women on Ladies Day.

As you all know, our industry lost some true greats last year with the passing of a number of giants in golf. Each

and every one of us can relate to these passings because these great men of golf and turfgrass management were heroes to many of you as well. So I’m sure you can all relate to losing someone who has mentored you, nurtured you along life’s journey and provided you with unconditional love and support.

It doesn’t matter if your hero was a coach, a teacher, a clergyman, a friend or close relative, the passing of these individuals changes everything in your life. Every family event is different now because of the empty chair at the end of the table, the sage advice that comes with so many years of life-long experiences and the little things you now think of that woulda, coulda, shoulda been different.

As you have probably figured out, my hero was my father. Even though he was small after losing so much weight and I was taller than him, I never, ever stopped looking up to him my entire life.

The other day after Dad’s passing my mom gave me his watch. I was showing it to my wife and there it was, this watch, just ticking away and with every second that goes by I miss my hero that much more.

Many things that have to do with successfully getting through life also have to do with keeping things in perspective. Really evaluating what’s important and finding that elusive work/life balance that I’ve been preaching to the golf industry for years, but not always practicing.

As many of you know, my dad was named Dymond. Even though it’s not spelled like the precious gem, he truly was a “Dymond in the Rough.”

There’s a Kenny Chesney song that says something like: “Don’t blink, life goes faster than you think.” In my case this is so true, however I do feel very blessed to have had my father for so many years; as I fully understand and appreciate the fact that other families have not.

For that I am very thankful.

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