

Regrettably, I left Northside Hospital on Saturday, May 27th, 44 years ago while Sally was in labor with Tyler. I rushed away from the labor waiting room for a friend's home to pick up tickets to the Bell South Atlanta Golf Classic, played for many years at Atlanta Country Club. I had missed Tyler's birth.

Tyler was a standard-bearer at this event for several years. The coincidence of my leaving the labor room exactly ten years earlier to pick up Classic tickets is a regret I often harbor.

I suspect we all have historic moments when we would have liked to "Play it Again, Sam."

The "Tyler labor" incident pales in comparison to many others. Tyler was always the curious/adventuresome one. He wanted to be involved in all things good and right, like being a standard-bearer at a professional golf event. I vividly recall his "bearing the standard" for Larry Nelson when he won in 1988.

A characteristic he maintained even at an early age was to always ask me whether "Should I do this or that?"

"I have been invited to be a standard-bearer at the Atlanta Classic. Would you drive me there?" was his way of asking the question.

There is one of the most regrets I will remember for my lifetime. Had I offered different "Tyler advice" when he called late one Saturday afternoon, he might be alive today. He was at Fort Benning in "Tank School" to become a "Tank Commander," his chosen MOS.

"Dad, we just received notice that tryouts for Ranger School will be held at 0600 in the morning."

My first whimsical advice, "If you do that, you will miss church," I mused.

"Do you think I should try to become a Ranger?" he asked seriously. "Even an Airborne Ranger?"

After some mumbo jumbo here I asked a serious question, "Don't you know if you succeed, you will be assigned to an Airborne Infantry Battalion and eventually end up somewhere in combat?" "But if you feel compelled and can take on the most difficult challenge of your lifetime, go for it!"

And he did, one of fewer than ¼ of the candidates to be successful, 51 jumps during a year in Korea, a redeployment to Kuwait, and then into Iraq where he was killed two weeks later.

What if I would have said emphatically, "*NO, don't do that!*" However, as per usual, I agreed with his judgment. Had I not, he would likely have taken my advice and be alive today.

In a spiritual sense, I believe "All things happen for a reason....and there are no coincidences in life."

I suppose "Honoring Tyler by Honoring Others," is an "earthly reason," but I eagerly/anxiously look forward to the "heavenly one."

We are here today to honor those who gave it all for God and Country. Their doing so has caused us to experience life's most dreaded "happening," the death of a child. By accident or disease, many have experienced life's most tragic "coincidence" with the loss of a child. Ours weren't killed in an automobile accident or succumbed to cancer. Our sons and daughters voluntarily risked and gave it all to secure a life of freedom for those here today and others around our country.

Representative Burnough, you sponsored the resolution to forever recognize Gold Star Fathers' Day annually on November the 9th.

Further, thank you for compelling others to create this everlasting memorial, Gold Star Fathers' Highway, with signage on Highway 139, making our county and state the first in the country to designate such to honor our Gold Star Fathers.

May God bless you and yours on this memorable day to honor the lives of our fallen soldiers.

Join me please in a moment of silent prayer to recall and cherish the lives of our children who gave it all for God and Country.

AMEN