

In memory of Jim Brannen

It is always sad when great people die. We think, why not someone else? But everyone dies sometime, so we have to think about the things that made a great person great. Here are a few of my stories.

Jim and I mostly played golf together. Even in the end he could hit the ball a long way. He was a big talker. Maybe more than some people find appropriate on the golf course, but I remember one time we were playing at the Walker Course and I was having a career front nine. I eagled #1, and kept it together pretty well. Jim faded into the background not because I had some “Ben Hogan” mental shield, but just because he knew that when a run is on, just be quiet. I had a birdie putt on #9 to par the front. Missed it, but then tapped in. Jim pulled the ball out of the hole, pitched it me, and said, that was a pretty nice front nine. He never said a word from #6 in until then.

Another fond memory was a time that Bobby and Mo were playing some crazy made-up tourney down in Edisto. Jim and I were markers, I guess. It was a fun round. Mo and Bobby played like crap, but Jim and I shot pretty well. I gave Jim a shot at #8 that was the difference in our score. Best shot I ever gave up.

I played golf a couple of times with Jim and Kristie. I always loved how she would say, “Daddy, what should I do on this shot?” A gentle soul, he always said the same thing: “Just keep your eye on the ball and swing through it.” It was like going to parent training camp.

Which reminds me of the times that he and I took Exley fishing on the Broad River down at Beaufort, we only caught catfish and small sharks but Exley had a ball and so did Jim. He was baiting up the hook with dead mullet as fast as Ex could bring them in. I was trying to catch bigger fish, so I was breaking the spikes off and putting the cats back out. It was amusing to all. These were big cats—5 lbs plus. Jim said, “If you catch a fish with that bait, it will be a big one.” I never caught anything.

Jim was an observant person and interested in all sorts of things. We were playing golf one time and a huge kettle of buzzards came across the course. We stopped and marveled at it for 10 minutes. Late in the day, they were roosting up near the course, and there wasn't anyone behind us. Jim was not one to be rude on the course.

Always smiling, always up beat. We would both carp about the politics of education from time to time, but it was clear that it was just water off the back for him. He had views and opinions, but he never let bitterness creep into his life.

Jim and Terry came over after the tornado knocked the deck off my house to laugh about it. We all agreed that it is best to see humor in adversity.

Sometimes Golf Magazine does these surveys: Who would you like most to play a round of golf with? My choice would be Jim—one more time.

MTM
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