

## Nick Palmer deserves honor from us all

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[Kathy Bedell](#)

The flag was at half staff at Lake County High School. The star-spangled banner hung close to the staff; there was no wind. In fact, the day was turning out to be sunny; the weather report said more snow. But since the news that weekend, everything seemed to be grayer. Leadville Marine Nick Palmer, 19, was killed in the line of duty in Iraq on Dec. 16.

I suppose that's what took me to the high school, where I first met Nick as a student during my substitute teaching days. He was a good athlete, a well-liked kid. Respectable. Decent. Even then, Nick was a young man of honor.

So how do we honor a young man like that? That's the place where every person in this community stands. What do we do? One of our own has died for our freedom; so how do we honor Nick Palmer?

Stuck in a place I could not write my way out of, I looped around the parking lot down to the extension of 3rd Street that looks over the high school football field, and there it was: a blank page. I thought about all of the hours that Nick had spent on that football field; practicing, playing, being coached by his father, Brad and cheered on by his mother Rachele and brother Dustin. Certainly, this was a place of honor. And the perfect place to pay honor to a fallen soldier.

I went home, grabbed my skis and returned to the untouched canvas. Standing at the top of the football stadium, there was only one word that kept tumbling around in my head: HONOR.

As I skied out my tribute to the young man who lived his life by the creed of honor, I thought about what the word means. Respect. Esteem. I thought about glory, achievement, dedication, but these just seemed to be synonyms. What does it truly mean to live an honorable life?

Honor is about choosing the right thing, even when you are tempted to have fun doing something less noble. Honor is about our elders and showing respect for our upbringing by valuing the most important lessons of life. Honor is about social courtesies; yes, especially the small things. Because honor is built of

many small things, many small things done right. Like footsteps, or traces in a field of snow, that pays tribute to a man of honor: N.P.

Perhaps Scott O'Grady said it best. He was the U.S. Air Force officer and aviator who was shot down during a flight mission over Bosnia in 1995 and survived six days being hunted by hostile ground troops before being rescued by U.S. helicopter.

"It wasn't the reward that mattered or the recognition you might harvest. It was your depth of commitment, your quality of service, the product of your devotion — these were the things that counted in a life. When you gave purely, the honor came in the giving, and that was honor enough."

Nick Palmer was a young man who gave his life so that we may be free to live a life of honor. Rise to the occasion. 'Tis the season.

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