

Daren's Eulogy by Miles Hidalgo

It's hard to know where to start. It's not very easy to sum up the life of someone as unique as Daren was. He truly was a great person -full of a zeal for life that bordered on the ignorant at times, emotional in everything he did, and just a jokester in every way he could be. Although the last 25 years of his life have been playing over and over in my mind, there are a few times that I can think of that truly sum up what kind of unique person Daren was. I remember all the times that we have shared together and I wanted to share them just to give people a better idea of the kind of person Daren was. Growing up, Daren was in a tough spot. With two older brothers who were already close, Daren ended up tagging along often - trying to get in on whatever mischief Jared and I were into. Unfortunately, more often than not we told him to go play with his sister and ended up ganging up on him rather than letting him tag along. He was always into his own things though - when Jared and I would wake up early to watch cartoons, Daren would get up early to watch infomercials. Despite all of our initial differences, ironically, he ended up being the best man at both Jared's and my weddings. And he got me a Swiffer Wet Jet for my wedding gift.

Daren was without a doubt a one-of-a-kind person. Daren had to try hard at school, but he could kick my ass at racquetball without even trying. I remember once when he was at Dallastown I came home from college and came to a wrestling practice with him. I remember I still had a few pounds on him but I was rusty - I knew it would be close. Daren almost pinned me right away - I had to do a very dirty move called a cheese grater (where you rub your knuckles on his ribs) to get out of the pin. He was just so physically gifted, but that was far from his only attribute. Daren was a jokester - always fun to be around. I can't even begin to recount all the funny stories, from the time he got in trouble the day before spring break while he was at West Point for going to an off-limits bar, to the time he had a bit of an incident with a closet following a pub crawl in downtown Cozumel. But he wasn't just a jokester - even though he could bring a smile to your face no matter what. When my wife Caroline and I lost our son, Daren was the first person to show up at the hospital. He was still covered in sweat and absolutely nasty from playing racquetball, but he held me and we cried together until we couldn't cry anymore. I remember talking to my wife about it - it was like Daren had lost a son,

the depths of his empathy and heartfelt emotions were so real and so tangible. If you knew Daren, he always wore his emotions on his sleeve and poured his heart into everything he did. When Jared lost his best friend, Rich Warner in Iraq in '04, Daren was crushed. He organized an assembly at his high school to honor Rich's memory, even though they had only met a handful of times over the years. I want to share one other story with everyone. I talked to Daren the morning before he went out on his last patrol. We talked about his injury and he of course down-played it. Not many of you know, but Daren was injured by an IED a few weeks ago. His commander said that he continued his patrol and didn't even complain. When he got back to his base, he was limping around trying to hide the fact that he had shrapnel in his thigh. His commander called Daren over and asked what was wrong, and he tried to hide the fact that he had been injured because he thought it was too minor. The commander ordered Daren to go to the aid station and escorted him there to make sure that he went. Daren went grudgingly with his commander. When they got to the aid station, the commander told Daren to drop his pants to show the medics the injury. Daren said to his commander, "Sir, I didn't know you were like that." Despite the fact that he could have had the shrapnel removed, Daren elected to stay with his platoon and continue to go out on missions with them rather than take the surgery and miss out on being with them. He wanted to wait for redeployment to Germany before getting the surgery. For those of you who know Daren, some of us can laugh about his immaturities - like how he didn't realize that he couldn't live in a house after his lease was up, or how he forgot to pay his rent or forward his mail for the 4 months he was in attended Ranger school. But Daren truly had grown up. It's sad to think of all the opportunities he'll never have - to be a husband, a father, a grandfather. But in the short time on this Earth, Daren was so much more. He was an amazing brother, a wonderful son, a loving uncle, a cherished friend, and a true hero. No one gets to pick how or when they will die, but Daren died doing the most honorable thing and the thing he wanted to do most - leading his Soldiers. I know we will all miss him terribly, but Daren would not want us to mourn him. Rather, celebrate the way he lived his life - without abandon, without regret, without agenda, and with nothing but the utmost of love and sincerity in all that he did. I'll always love and miss you little brother.